

The year "2024" is displayed in a large, white, outline-style font. The numbers are centered horizontally across a blue, semi-transparent banner that covers the middle of the page. The background of the entire page is a blurred photograph of two students in a classroom setting, one of whom is writing in a notebook.



A young child with blonde hair, wearing a light blue shirt, is sitting at a desk in a classroom. The child's right arm is raised high, with their index finger pointing upwards. In the background, a chalkboard is visible with some faint writing. The overall scene is brightly lit and captures a moment of active participation in a lesson.

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

04

## ABOUT SCORE

- 04 Mission & History
- 05 Goals & Strategic Priorities
- 06 Theory of Action

07

## IMPACT SNAPSHOT: MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

13

## 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

- 15 Connecting Education to Work
- 19 Bolstering the Educator Pipeline
- 23 Growing the High-Quality Charter School Sector
- 27 Supporting Strong Teaching and Learning
- 30 Using Data to Drive Student Outcomes
- 32 Connecting the Dots

34

## PRIORITIZING A STUDENT-FOCUSED AGENDA IN 2025

35

## SCORE BOARD OF DIRECTORS





# About SCORE

## OUR MISSION AND HISTORY

The mission of the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) is to catalyze transformative change in Tennessee education so that all students can achieve success.

SCORE is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan institution founded in 2009 by Sen. Bill Frist, M.D., former U.S. Senate Majority Leader. Striving to be a durable partner and trusted advisor on Tennessee education, SCORE is focused on driving change for students from kindergarten to career through policy and practice — and taking it to scale.

# About SCORE

## GOALS

SCORE has three goals that guide the organization's work to drive success for all students in Tennessee:

- 1 All students receive an excellent public K-12 education.**
- 2 All students earn a credential or postsecondary degree that prepares them for a career enabling economic independence.**
- 3 Economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and rural students see improved success across all goals relative to their peers.**

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve these goals, SCORE has four strategic priorities:



### **Great teaching and leadership:**

Supporting great instruction and curriculum in the classroom and strengthening the teacher pipeline



### **Innovative school models and approaches:**

Advancing approaches and programs that have promise in accelerating student success



### **Education-to-career pathways:**

Aligning K-12 and postsecondary programs with career success



**Supportive ecosystem:** Supporting the broader education ecosystem to reach its potential and ensure educational excellence

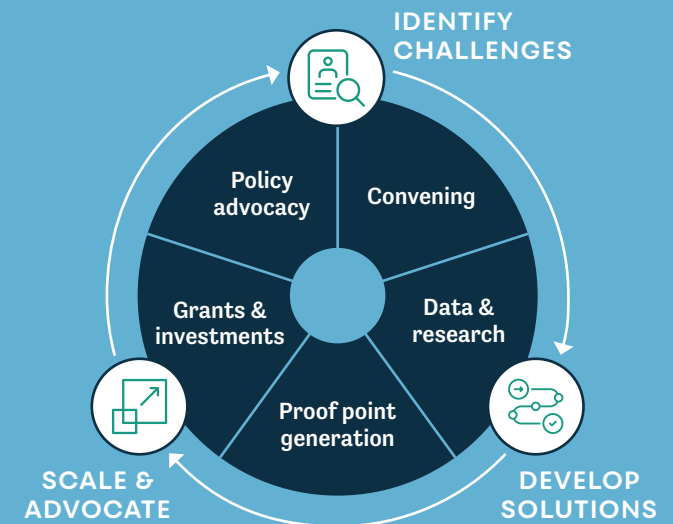
## THEORY OF ACTION

As we pursue these student-focused goals and priorities through the initiatives you'll read about in the forthcoming pages, we utilize a **theory of action** marked by the following core tenets:

- We strive to be a **durable partner and trusted advisor** on Tennessee education, focused on advancing change through policy and practice — and taking it to scale.
- We **identify challenges and potential solutions** for students based on data and research, convene stakeholders, and link Tennessee to national conversations.
- We **develop effective approaches** by working directly with schools, districts, institutions, and employers to innovate and generate proof points.
- We **enable the scaling of promising solutions** by advocating for student-focused policy and activating philanthropy, assistance, and investment.
- We continue to use **data and research to monitor progress, measure impact, and identify additional areas of need for students.**



In practice, this theory of action is oriented around an iterative cycle of effectuating change for students.



A photograph of two students sitting at a desk, looking at books and papers. One student is pointing at a page in a book. There is a blue water bottle on the desk. A yellow circular graphic is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing the text 'Impact Snapshot'.

# Impact Snapshot

## MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

Student success data from across the kindergarten-to-career continuum provide an important annual look at how Tennessee's policies and practices are working for students. Data from 2024 demonstrate that Tennessee students are on the way to leading the nation in K-12 thanks to the policies and practices prioritized by our state. Tennessee's strong policy landscape and commitment to nation-leading innovative practices helped to set our state apart on the Nation's Report Card during a year when most states continued to decline. For the first time, Tennessee ranked in the top half of states for proficiency in fourth- and eighth-grade math and reading. While these gains showed a positive trend in K-12 student achievement, persisting achievement gaps demonstrate the need for continued focus from educators and advocates alike.

In postsecondary, student success is increasing, but more work is required to put every student on a path to a career that enables economic independence. Data show that student success is increasing, with college-going and degree attainment continuing to trend upward. These results serve as clear evidence that Tennessee's priorities, initiatives, and investments have led to clear gains for students. The data also show the importance of setting ambitious goals for all Tennessee students so that every student is on a path to a high-wage, high-demand career after high school.

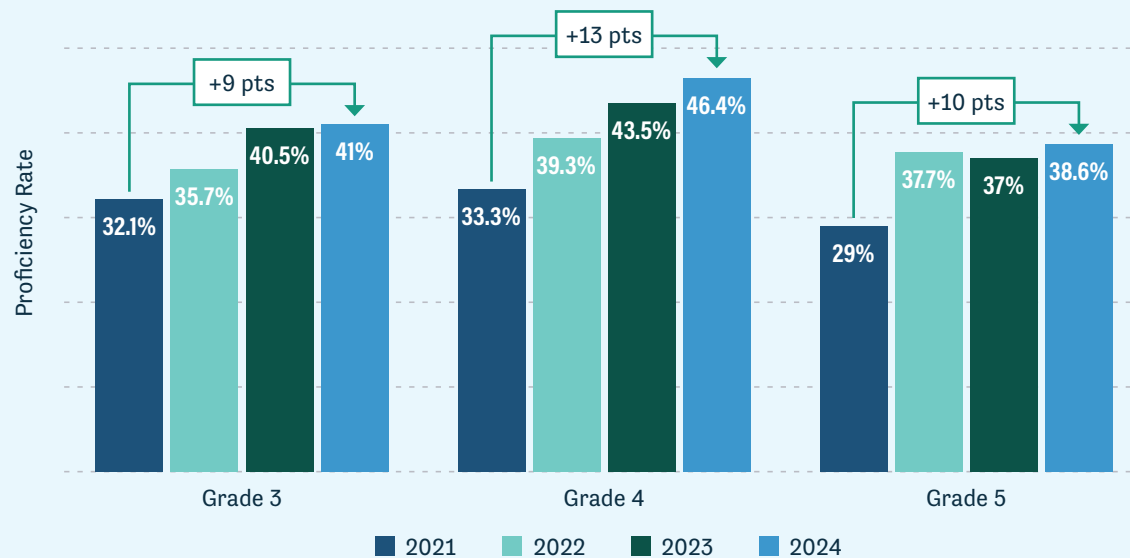
However, we still have important work to do to ensure all students in Tennessee are achieving success. Achievement gaps still exist for students from traditionally underserved groups, and there are gaps in our understanding of students' trajectories. The data below illustrate both the tremendous progress we have made as a state and the areas where we still need to work together to ensure all students can succeed.



### Students are exceeding pre-pandemic ELA performance.

Results from the 2024 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) show the continued positive impact of the state's policies and investments in K-12 education. In English language arts (ELA), students experienced record high proficiency in third, fourth, and fifth grades, which signals that the hard work of Tennessee educators, driven by the state's clear focus on early literacy, is paying off. Even with this success, not all Tennessee students are proficient in reading, and achievement gaps persist for students from historically underserved groups. This underscores the need for Tennessee educators and advocates to double down on the policies and practices that are propelling students in the right direction.

### Students Are Exceeding Pre-Pandemic ELA Performance



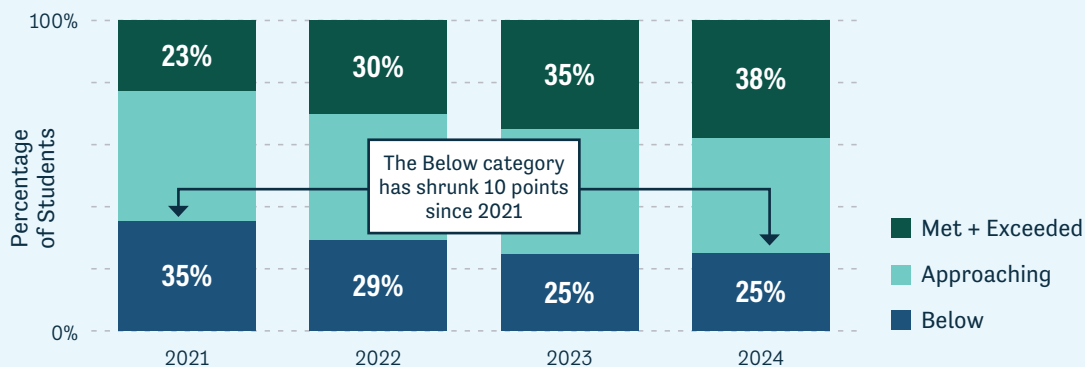
Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program ELA proficiency rates for grades 3, 4, and 5 from 2021 to 2024

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2024

**Math proficiency rates continue to improve — notably, the percentage of students scoring in the lowest performance category has declined dramatically since 2021.**

TCAP showed that overall math proficiency rates for grades three through eight have not quite caught up to the pre-pandemic high of 40.8% in 2019; however, trends in student performance show meaningful progress for recovered student learning. Since pandemic-related declines in 2021, the Below performance category has declined more than 10 points. This means more students are on track to achieve or are achieving proficiency in math.

**More Students Succeeding, Fewer Students Left Behind**



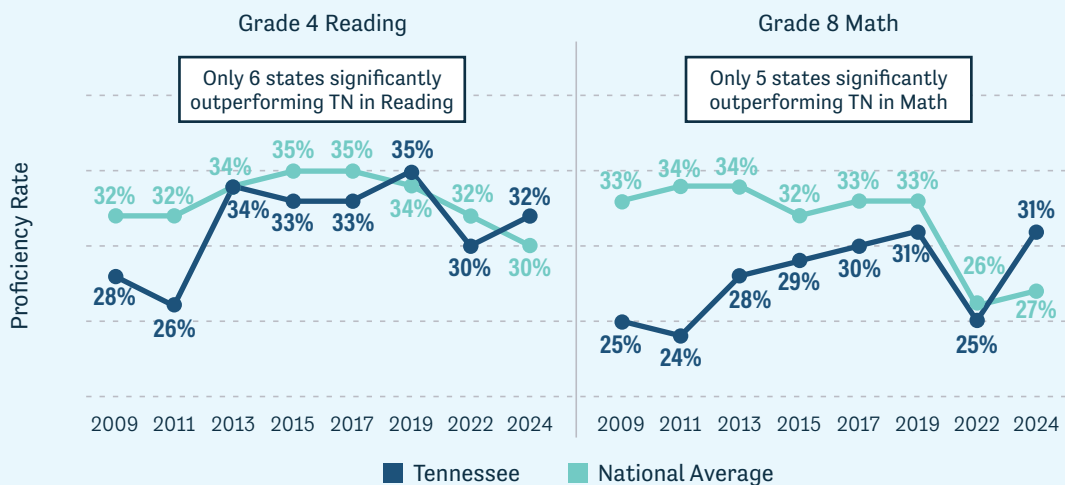
Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program grades 3-8 performance category distribution for math, 2021-2024

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2024

**For the first time, Tennessee is now in the top half of states for fourth- and eighth-grade math and reading.**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation’s Report Card, scores reveal that Tennessee’s fourth and eighth graders are outpacing the nation in math and reading proficiency rates. For the first time, Tennessee is now in the top 25 states for proficiency across both tested grades and subjects. Tennessee now ranks 24th in the nation in fourth-grade reading and 20th in the nation in eighth-grade math. Among Black students, Tennessee ranks first in the nation in eighth-grade math based on scale scores.

**Tennessee Growth Surpasses the National Average Across Subjects**



National Assessment of Educational Progress proficiency rates for grade 4 reading and grade 8 math, 2009 to 2024

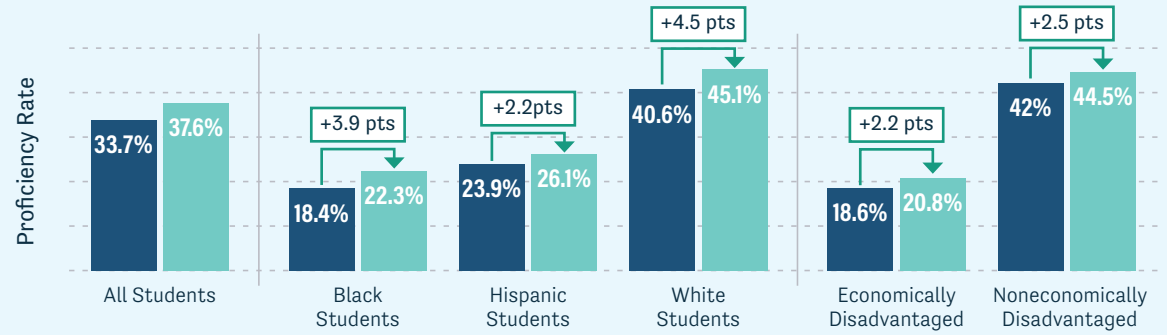
Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2025

**Despite historic gains, Tennessee’s K-12 students are not where we aspire for them to be.**

Despite groups now exceeding pre-pandemic performance on TCAP, achievement gaps have not narrowed and, in some cases, are wider now than they were in 2019. Namely, economically disadvantaged students (who make up roughly one-third of Tennessee students) scored proficient at half the rate of their noneconomically disadvantaged peers.

On NAEP, the overall average proficiency rate gap between Black and White students still hovers around 20 points. That gap should not exist, and we must continue to work to close it. Another area of concern is the gap that persists between Hispanic students and their White peers. The gap narrowed for fourth-grade math, remained the same for eighth-grade reading, and widened for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math.

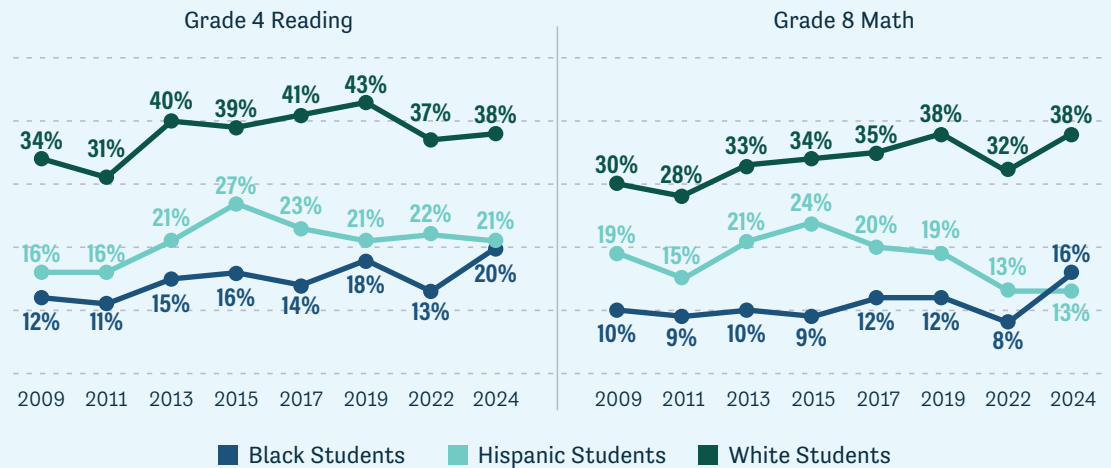
**Across Groups, Students Are Exceeding Pre-Pandemic ELA Performance; Though, Concerning Equity Gaps Remain**



Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program grades 3-8 ELA proficiency by student group, 2019 vs. 2024

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2024

**Black Students Show Historic Gains, Narrowing Equity Gaps**



National Assessment of Educational Progress proficiency rates for grade 4 reading and grade 8 math by race/ethnicity group, 2009 to 2024

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2025

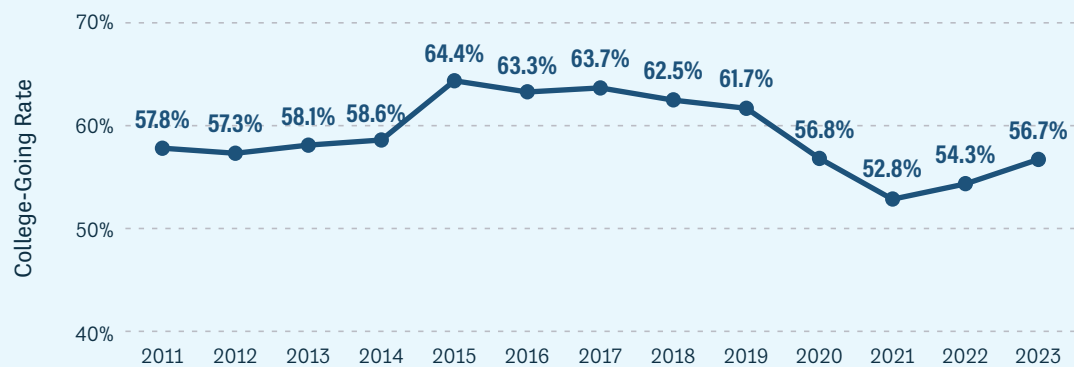
**In postsecondary, post-pandemic college-going and attainment are increasing.**

After dramatic pandemic-related decreases in college-going and attainment, both rates are trending upward. For the graduating class of 2023, Tennessee’s college-going rate was 57% — an increase of 3 percentage points from 2022. Likewise, the attainment rate, which measures degree and credential completion for Tennessee adults ages 25-64, increased from 47.9% in 2022 to 48.8% in 2023.

**Despite gains in college-going and degree attainment, these rates are not meeting workforce need.**

Too few Tennesseans have the education they need to access careers that enable economic independence — even when those careers are right here in Tennessee. Currently, 63% of jobs require some type of postsecondary degree or credential while less than 50% of adults have one. Further, only about half of adults have a credential that aligns to a high-demand career.

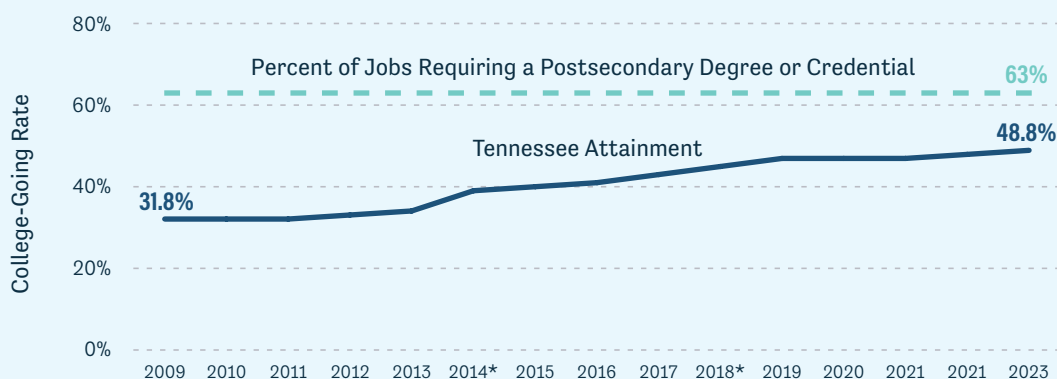
**College-Going Rate Continues to Recover From Pandemic Declines**



College-going rate, 2011 to 2023

Source: Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2024

**Tennessee Attainment Rate Continues to Increase but Remains Short of Meeting Workforce Needs**



Tennessee progress toward state attainment goal compared to attainment rate needed to meet economic demand projected for 2031. Attainment rate refers to Tennesseans ages 25-64 with a postsecondary degree or credential.

Data Note: In 2014, workforce-relevant certificates were included in calculations. In 2018, industry-recognized certifications were included in calculations.

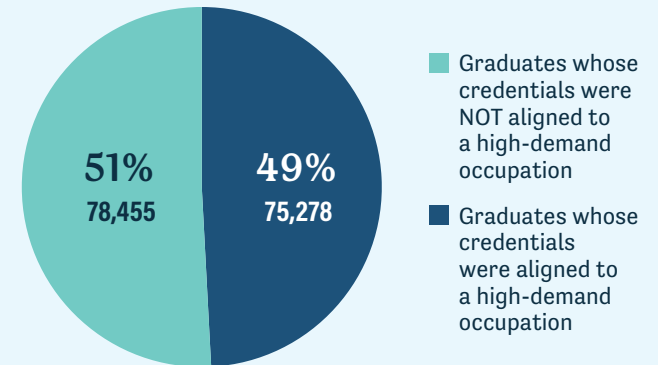
Source: Lumina Foundation Stronger Nation Report, 2024

**In addition, more information is needed to capture the experience and opportunity for Tennessee students as they enter careers.**

Currently, we do not know how students' education experiences lead to careers that enable economic independence. This information can help Tennessee stakeholders make data-informed decisions about policies, investments, and practices that support students to earn credentials that lead to financially stable and fulfilling careers.

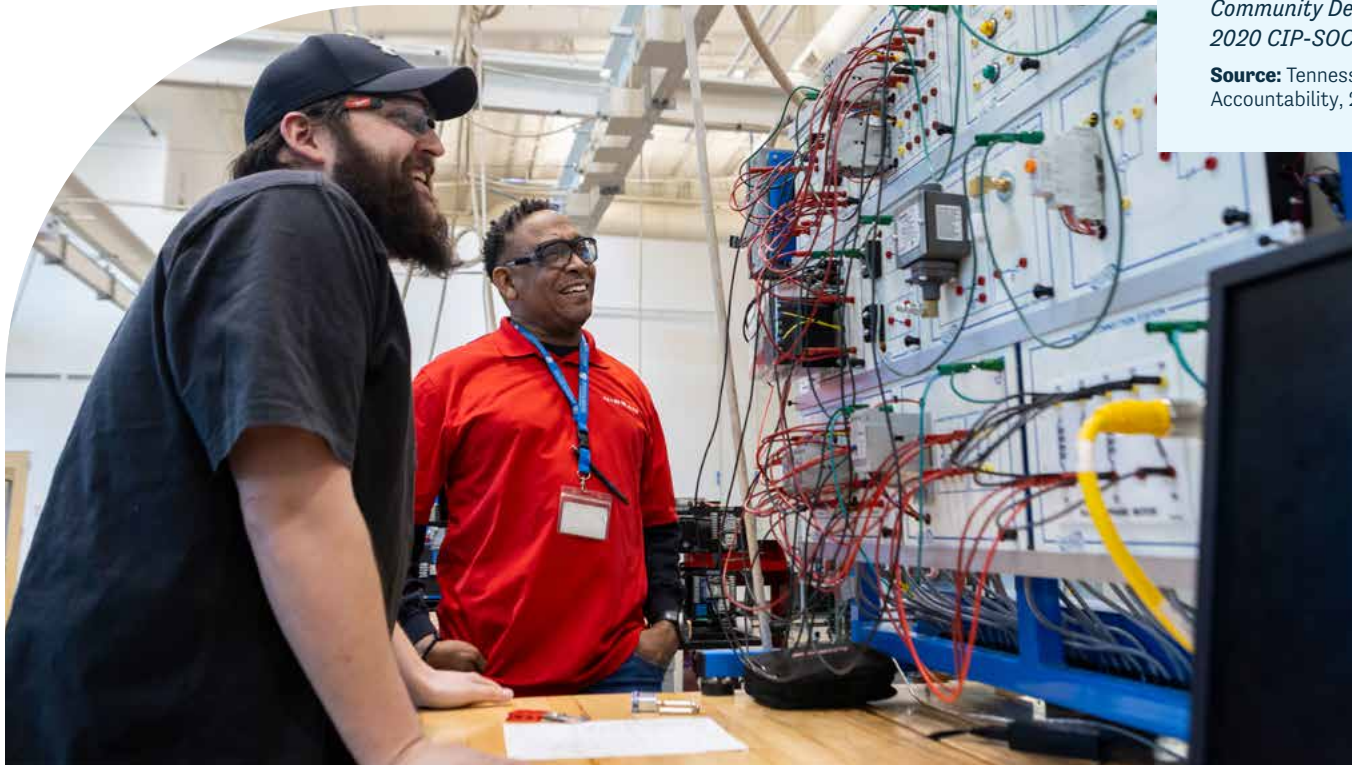
Measurable progress from K-12 through postsecondary and to a career for Tennessee students informs SCORE's work and helps guide our priorities. Throughout this report, we highlight how this data and other important measures informed each of our priorities and the strategic policy advocacy, practice, research, and investments that drive our impact.

**Less Than Half of Completers Earn a Credential Aligned to a High-Demand Occupation**



*Analysis of data from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development, and Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020 CIP-SOC Crosswalk*

**Source:** Tennessee Office of Research & Education Accountability, 2024





# 2024 Year in Review

**In 2024, SCORE focused on key strategies to ensure all students have the opportunity to earn a credential or postsecondary degree that prepares them for a career enabling economic independence.**

Throughout the year, SCORE balanced this focus with a recommitment to policies and practices that are foundational for student success in K-12 education and beyond. Ensuring every student can experience a seamless and effective journey from kindergarten through career provided a roadmap to our efforts in 2024. We used data to identify pivotal milestones along a student's pathway from education to career and then elevated research-backed practices, invested in innovative ideas to generate proof points, and advocated for policies that drive improved outcomes at every step of a student's path. Ultimately, our impact included: connecting education to work, bolstering the educator pipeline, growing the high-quality charter sector, supporting strong teaching and learning, and using data to drive student outcomes. Through the specific initiatives detailed on the pages that follow, each area of work addressed critical challenges and made a significant impact on our mission to ensure all students find success.



## 2024 in Review

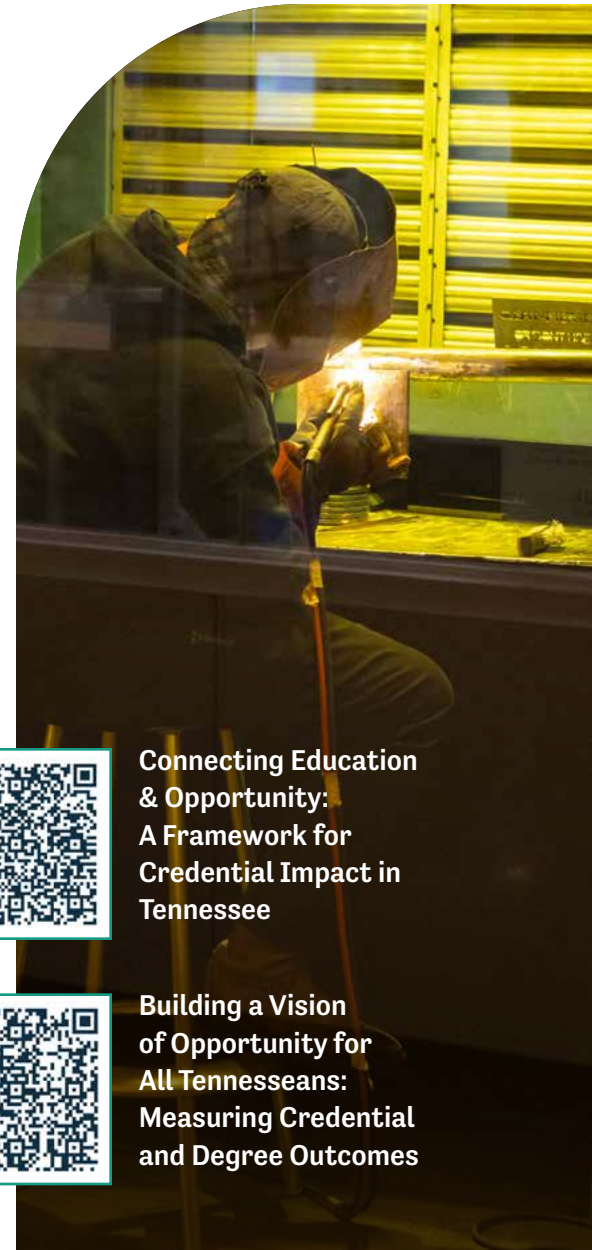
# CONNECTING EDUCATION TO WORK

For every Tennessee student to achieve success, they must have access to a clear pathway from K-12 education to a credential that leads to a high-wage, high-demand career. While postsecondary access and degree attainment have increased in Tennessee, there has been limited information for both students and decision-makers on which credentials lead to career success. To solve this, SCORE prioritized creating a clear picture of which credentials lead to workforce opportunity for Tennessee students.

**In 2024, SCORE led key stakeholders to align on a data-driven framework to ensure Tennessee students earn an impact credential – a credential that leads to a career that enables economic independence.**

**SCORE connected education to work by developing an impact credential framework for Tennessee.**

To create a common vision and framework for what postsecondary success connected to career outcomes looks like, SCORE convened a working group with more than 25 thought leaders from K-12 and postsecondary education, student support organizations, the business community, and state government. Across nine months, SCORE led the group to align on a framework that, for the first time, gave Tennesseans a common method to assess outcomes of credential and degree programs in Tennessee using multiple measures. Earnings, job outlook, and stackability became the key data measures of the framework, backed by research conducted in partnership with the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In October at a SCORE Institute gathering of more than 150 stakeholders, SCORE released the framework in a landmark report and shared key opportunities to apply the framework across policy and practice. In December, SCORE launched important next steps in the work, reconvening stakeholders to identify how to apply the framework as a lens across policy and practice to ensure Tennessee's policies, investments, and supports are guiding more students to earn impact credentials.



**Connecting Education & Opportunity:  
A Framework for  
Credential Impact in  
Tennessee**



**Building a Vision  
of Opportunity for  
All Tennesseans:  
Measuring Credential  
and Degree Outcomes**

## Re-Envisioning Outcomes-Based Funding Formula

To ensure postsecondary policies are propelling student success, SCORE is committed to ensuring policies that impact students in Tennessee — including postsecondary funding — are incentivizing stronger pathways to economic independence. In advance of the 2025 review of the Outcomes-Based Funding Formula by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and a formula review committee, SCORE analyzed the state’s funding formula and engaged 40 postsecondary leaders across the state to understand the formula’s efficacy. SCORE published a memo, ***Funding Student Opportunity Through Tennessee’s Outcomes-Based Formula***, which elevates ways the current formula is not adequately supporting students toward postsecondary completion and career success. SCORE advocates for prioritizing impact credentials through the formula.



Funding Student  
Opportunity  
Through Tennessee’s  
Outcomes-Based  
Formula



**SCORE supported innovative education-to-work models.** To scale pathways that result in an impact credential, SCORE served as a strategic intermediary and advisor for the incubation of innovative education-to-work models. SCORE supported local leaders with philanthropic support, strategic planning and advising, access to national experts, and technical assistance to generate proof points that address local workforce needs through accelerated education-to-work pathways. In addition, SCORE convened cross-sector industry and education leaders to learn from each other and experts on pathways design. Our support for innovative models included:

- **Innovative nursing pathways:** SCORE provided strategic support to two nursing models that put students on a path to earn an impact credential; in this case, a nursing degree. In rural Northeast Tennessee, SCORE provided strategic support to Ballad Health, a health care system with 21 hospitals in the Appalachian region, as it partners with regional high schools to create an accelerated high school **nursing pathway** program (**Ballad Health Academy**) that will launch in fall 2025. In Nashville, SCORE provided strategic support to **Nurses Middle College** (NursesMC), a network of public nursing charter high schools, to launch a nursing charter high school, NursesMC Nashville. SCORE facilitated connections with education, health care, and community partners to support advocacy for NursesMC Nashville’s charter approval. In October, NursesMC Nashville was unanimously approved by the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission and will open in fall 2025.



- **West Tennessee Rural Collaborative:** In West Tennessee, SCORE supports a group of rural districts who are working to foster greater student access to impact credentials in advanced manufacturing that are aligned to the region’s unique workforce need thanks to Ford’s Blue Oval City investment. The network is focused on developing accelerated high school pathways that integrate industry partnerships, dual enrollment, and work-based learning opportunities that can lead to high-demand, high-wage jobs in industrial maintenance, machining, mechatronics, engineering, and transportation. In the 2024-25 school year, the collaborative was fortunate to partner with the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) to receive one year of support from three state-funded positions to launch the initial work to clarify their vision and foster alignment. Moving forward, the collaborative will expand to include additional districts and will have dedicated support from Education Strategy Group (ESG) to help the districts map their current pathways offerings, more formally capture work-based learning opportunities, and plan for strategic engagement with key employers in the region.
- **Innovative pathways in Chattanooga:** In 2024, SCORE invested in **Chattanooga 2.0**, an organization seeking to improve economic opportunity and quality of life through education system change in Chattanooga and Hamilton County. SCORE’s support advanced the next phase of the Viable Pathways initiative to develop 10-plus viable career pathways that lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs in Hamilton County.
- **Tennessee Career Academy:** SCORE invested in an innovative public charter school, Tennessee Career Academy (TCA), a first of its kind in Tennessee. The Memphis high school, slated to open in fall 2025, is dedicated to career and technical education.



## Today’s Students, Tomorrow’s Talent: A Guide to Education- Employer Models

To support the development of education-to-work pathways, SCORE published a guide for employers, K-12, and postsecondary



Today’s Students,  
Tomorrow’s Talent:  
A Guide to Education-  
Employer Models

institutions to design programs that put students on a clear pathway to a job that enables economic independence.

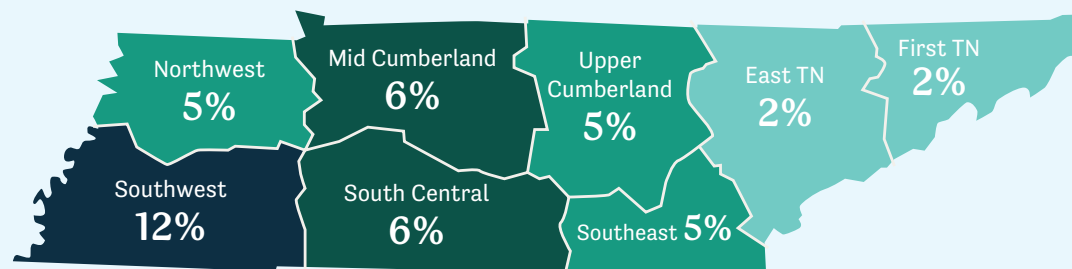
## 2024 in Review

# BOLSTERING THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE

Access to highly effective teachers is essential for student success. Tennessee needs a robust teacher pipeline and effective support available to all teachers. However, growing evidence suggests that Tennessee students have unreliable and inequitable access to effective teachers. Data show more than 1,400 teaching vacancies, declining educator preparation program enrollment, and decreasing teacher retention.



## Teacher Vacancies Vary by Region, Though District-Specific Data Would Support a More Nuanced Understanding of Localized Vacancies



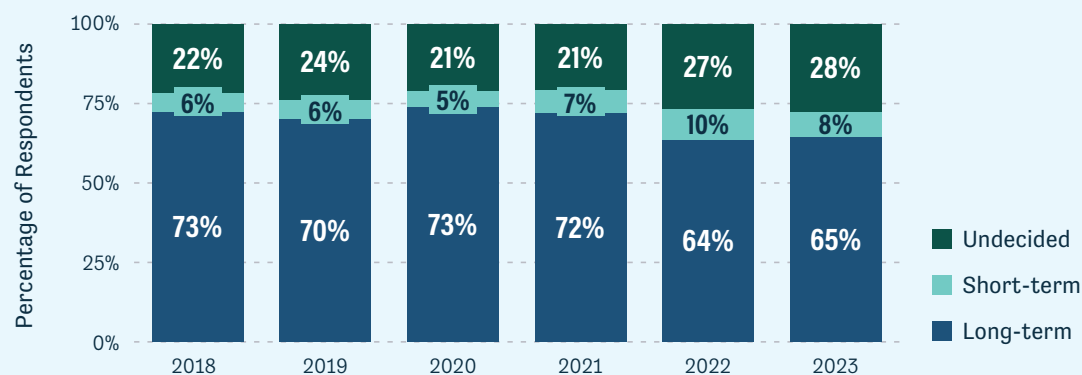
*Percentage of positions unfilled by a licensed, in-subject teacher by CORE region, SY 2022-23*

**Data Note:** Percentages refer to CORE region averages rather than individual districts. Unfilled positions include vacancies and positions filled by individuals with permits and emergency credentials.

**Source:** Tennessee Department of Education, 2023

## In Recent Years, Fewer Teachers Reported That They Plan to Remain in Education Long Term

### How long do you plan to remain in education?



*Length of planned tenure in education, 2018 to 2023*

**Source:** Tennessee Educator Survey, 2023



**In 2024, SCORE bolstered the educator pipeline by sharing clear data insights around the educator labor market, advocating for improved educator licensure processes, and supporting innovative teacher talent solutions.**

**SCORE equipped districts with regional educator labor market data and insights.**

To fully understand the nuances and challenges in Tennessee’s educator labor market, SCORE commissioned the Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) to partner with 16 local districts, research their educator pipelines, and uncover the root causes of pipeline issues at the local level. While district leaders used their own reports to make strategic talent decisions, SCORE used the data to understand labor market needs across the state. SCORE presented the data at a SCORE Institute attended by state and national leaders and then published and disseminated key data insights through a series of four memos addressing the following key topics:



**Understanding the Educator Labor Market: A Look at Tennessee’s Data**



**Rural District Leader Perceptions of the Educator Labor Market**



**Strategic School Staffing: Tennessee’s Opportunity to Sustain and Elevate Great Teaching**



**Tennessee’s Teacher Pipeline: Initiatives to Increase Students Access to Effective Teachers**





**SCORE researched innovative staffing models and built support for pilots.**

In response to data revealing the challenges to building a stronger teacher pipeline in Tennessee, SCORE engaged current educators, researched innovative staffing models across the country, and built support for piloting innovative staffing models in Tennessee. This work included best practice visits to other states and publishing a memo on the elements of innovative staffing. SCORE plans to use this work to pilot innovative staffing models in 2025 that increase student access to excellent educators while creating the conditions for educators to experience deep support and have more sustainable careers.

### **SCORE advocated for changes in policy that improve the teacher pipeline.**

To address teacher pipeline challenges at the policy level, SCORE participated in the State Board of Education’s licensure review committee, providing recommendations to reduce barriers to the profession, and through convening an education advocacy coalition to support legislative solutions for teacher licensure during the 2024 Tennessee General Assembly. Also, in partnership with THEC, SCORE recommended several changes to improve the Future Teacher Scholarship’s application process that ultimately helped improve access to available funds for aspiring teachers. Lastly, to prepare for 2025’s General Assembly, SCORE planned and conducted school visits with a group of legislators throughout fall 2024. During these visits, SCORE partnered with district leaders to elevate voices on teacher pipeline challenges, including those related to teacher training, mentorship of novice teachers, and teacher licensure.

### **SCORE supported innovative solutions to bolster the teacher talent pipeline.**

To more directly increase the number of aspiring teachers in the pipeline, SCORE invested in innovative talent solutions to support a high-quality pipeline of aspiring teachers in districts and public charter schools. SCORE invested in the Nashville Teacher Residency, Memphis Teacher Residency, Man Up, Middle Tennessee State University’s (MTSU) Tennessee Teach Back Initiative, and others to expand the teacher pipeline. Additionally, SCORE supported school-based teacher residency programs at LEAD Public Schools, KIPP Nashville, Nashville Classical Charter School, Aventura Community School, and others. Each of these investments supported innovative solutions to increase teachers in the pipeline so that more students across Tennessee have access to a high-quality educator.



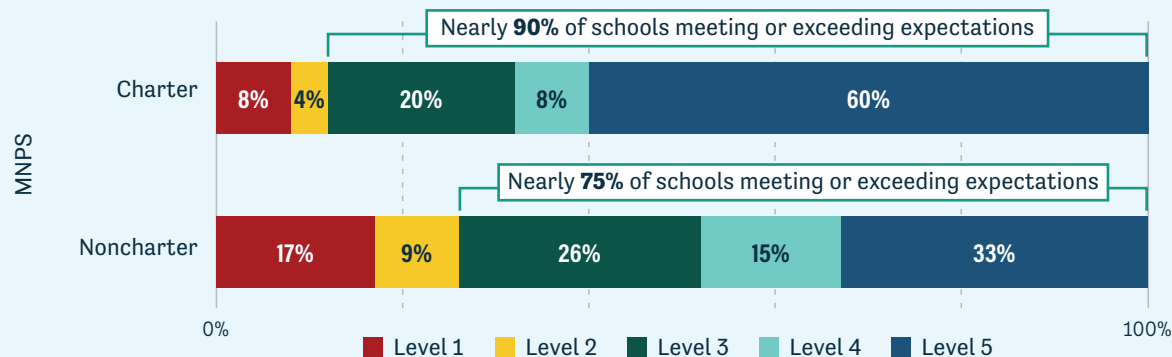
2024 in Review

## GROWING THE HIGH-QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOL SECTOR

Public charter schools in Tennessee are increasing student achievement, especially for students from historically underserved groups. Despite this, Tennessee’s high-quality public charter schools face unnecessary roadblocks to opening, operating, and serving students.



### Metro Nashville Charter Sector Shows Strong Results for Student Growth

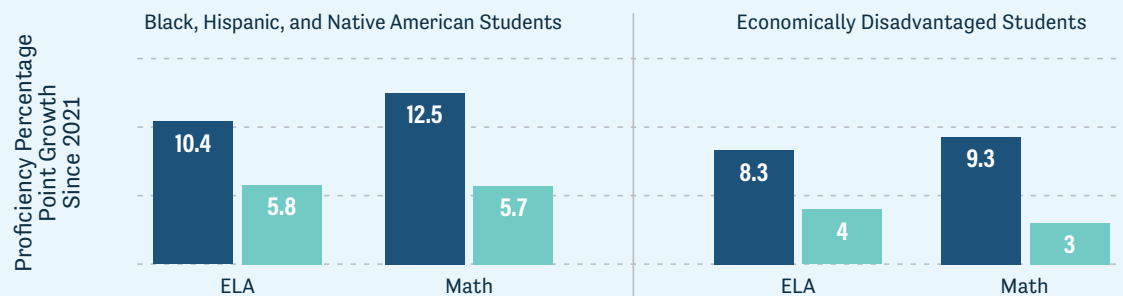


Distribution of schools by Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System levels by school type for Metro Nashville Public Schools, 2024

**Data Note:** School counts are not inclusive of public charters authorized by the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission.

**Source:** Tennessee Department of Education, 2024

### Charter Schools Show Double to Triple the Growth of District Peers for Historically Underserved Student Groups



Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program proficiency growth for ELA and math for grades 3-8 by school type by student group, 2021-2024

**Data Note:** Charter data is not inclusive of the Achievement School District. Noncharter refers to traditional public schools in districts that also have charter options.

**Source:** Tennessee Department of Education, 2024

**In 2024, SCORE strengthened conditions through advocacy, collaboration, and strategic investments so that high-quality public charter schools have the resources necessary to open on time, better support the students they serve, and expand to reach a greater number of students.**

**SCORE advocated for increased funding for charter school facilities.** In 2024, SCORE prioritized addressing one of the primary barriers that keep public charter schools from opening on time and at capacity: facilities challenges. SCORE championed three key policy goals for public charter schools, including increasing access to underutilized and vacant facilities, reinvestment in charter facilities funds, and establishing a one-time investment for a revolving facilities loan fund. SCORE championed progress toward all three of these goals, with our advocacy leading to passing legislation that improved public charter schools' access to underutilized and vacant facilities and a one-time state grant investment of \$15 million for charter facility needs. While a revolving loan fund was not established by the state in 2024, SCORE's advocacy led to increased state partner interest in establishing a revolving loan fund in 2025.





## New Networks Supporting Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities in all school types are in need of additional support. Due to the flexible and nimble operations in Tennessee's public charter schools, coupled with high accountability, SCORE launched two new networks to pilot best practices for supporting students with disabilities. Through these two strategic practice networks, SCORE is working to identify and promote promising practices in special education so that all students can receive the support they need.

- **IGNITE Nashville:** SCORE convened a network of Nashville charter schools focused on implementing and improving coplanning, a national best practice where general education and special education teachers plan together to intentionally support the needs of all students. This initiative, through partnership with the Diverse Learners Cooperative and Marshall CoLab, is expected to significantly enhance the educational experience for students with disabilities by fostering collaborative teaching practices across participating schools.
- **Finance leaders cohort:** SCORE convened a cohort of Nashville charter finance leaders focused on supporting financial decision-makers to maximize the resources to support students with disabilities. This network, which is launched in partnership with All Means All, is supporting schools serving approximately 5,000 students with an annual budget exceeding \$100 million.

### **SCORE seeded new charter school models.**

SCORE supported the incubation of new charter school models through strategic investments to ensure more Tennessee students had access to high-quality school choices. First, SCORE supported the Nashville Incubator, which is dedicated to recruiting, developing, and supporting founders and entrepreneurs in the charter school space. In 2024, the Nashville Incubator helped support three newly approved public charter schools and two schools that are preparing for the approval process. These schools represent new models that were not currently available to Nashville students. Next, SCORE made first-time investments from our Charter Talent Fund in three Montessori education models across the state. In Nashville, SCORE invested in Invictus Nashville Charter School, Nashville's first Montessori public charter school, specifically supporting the recruitment and certification of lead teachers. In Chattanooga, we invested in Montessori Elementary at Highland Park to support additional grades, and in Memphis, we invested in the growth of Libertas School of Memphis' expansion into a middle school.

### **SCORE empowered the charter school ecosystem.**

SCORE continued to serve as a charter strategy and advocacy leader by supporting an ecosystem in which high-quality charter schools can thrive. Following the release of the 2024 TCAP results, SCORE hosted a data briefing for partners on the 2024 TCAP results for public charter schools. In preparation for the 2025 legislative session, SCORE met with public charter school partners and advocates to align on a set of priorities to address charter school facilities and authorization challenges. This process helped build alignment among partners around policy priorities aimed at closing the facilities funding gap and improving authorization pathways to meet local need. In addition, SCORE supported charter advocacy organizations with strategic investments, including parent organizers The Memphis Lift and Nashville Propel.



Check Out SCORE's  
Public Charter School  
Resources Page

2024 in Review

## SUPPORTING STRONG TEACHING AND LEARNING

Students succeed when they have access to effective teachers who are held accountable for student outcomes and supported by adequate resources. Tennessee’s commitment to foundational policies like teacher evaluation, research-based literacy strategies, and a modernized K-12 funding formula moved our state from the bottom of the pack nationally in education outcomes to one of the fastest growing in the country — entering the top half of states for math and reading proficiency on NAEP in 2024. This progress underscored the importance of defending and advancing policies and practices that support strong teaching and learning.

### Change in Tennessee Rankings on the Nation’s Report Card

|                      | 2009          | 2024               |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Fourth-Grade Reading | Ranked 38th → | <b>Ranked 24th</b> |
| Fourth-Grade Math    | Ranked 45th → | <b>Ranked 13th</b> |
| Eighth-Grade Reading | Ranked 34th → | <b>Ranked 21st</b> |
| Eighth-Grade Math    | Ranked 42th → | <b>Ranked 20th</b> |

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2024



**In 2024, SCORE led a coalition of advocacy partners to ensure the policies that have propelled Tennessee student success for the last decade remained intact. With threats to roll back these policies, SCORE advocated for, defended, and supported the most foundational elements of education policy, including academic standards, annual assessment, school accountability, and teacher evaluation.**

**SCORE employed a multiprong strategy to recommit stakeholders to foundational policies.**

SCORE strategically engaged stakeholders to uphold foundational policies that support strong teaching and learning through a variety of coordinated efforts.

- **SCORE published and widely distributed a memo series, Policy Pillars: Supporting What Works.** These memos highlighted policies that have led to significant advances in student achievement and provide an essential foundation for Tennessee’s K-12 education system, including standards and assessment, teacher evaluation, literacy, and the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA).
- **SCORE engaged stakeholders to build support for foundational policies.** SCORE facilitated a series of in-person stakeholder briefings focused on foundational policy impact data. These included meetings with cross-sector partners and school visits with policymakers. During school visits, legislators toured classrooms to see best practices in literacy curriculum and instruction and discussed how foundational policies, such as assessments and teacher evaluation, help inform district practices. This engagement helped decision-makers see the positive impact of Tennessee’s foundational education reforms on the ground.
- **SCORE defended against legislation that would roll back foundational policies.** By elevating our concerns to policymakers and activating a diverse coalition of advocacy partners during the 2024 General Assembly, we successfully defended hard-fought reforms, with 100% of the policies SCORE opposed being defeated — including attempts to roll back teacher evaluation and annual student assessment.



**Policy Pillars Memo Series: Supporting What Works**



**SCORE supported innovative practices that improve early literacy training and instruction to bolster student achievement and close achievement gaps.**

While working to ensure Tennessee remained rooted in key foundational policies, SCORE championed innovative practices for reimagining teaching and learning through strategic practice networks and investments. In the Lead in Literacy network, SCORE worked with four educator preparation providers (EPPs) and their district partners to align on a shared vision for excellent literacy instruction that ensures teachers are prepared to teach literacy on day one and are retained for the long term. The work was summarized in a report that included a toolkit designed to promote partnerships between districts and EPPs across the state in order to better prepare teachers in the use of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). In addition, SCORE provided strategic investments and guidance to the Memphis Teacher Residency to support early literacy programming. This included support for their annual literacy professional development convening, a reading specialist certification program, and school-based partnerships at two Memphis public charter schools. Through cohort-based teacher training, coaching, and leader support, these partnerships offer deep support to schools in science of reading implementation.



**Instructionally Coherent Literacy Support Toolkit**



2024 in Review

## USING DATA TO DRIVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Strategic data use, across all levels, supports student success and equips policymakers, schools, institutions, system leaders, educators, and parents with the information they need to advance student learning and success. Despite ongoing efforts to increase data use, data-driven decision-making is not consistently prioritized because Tennessee lacks key data that are necessary to have a full picture of where gaps and opportunities for students exist.

**In 2024, SCORE recentered data at the forefront of critical education conversations, ensuring data can be leveraged to increase student access to pathways that lead from education to successful careers.**



**Perspective:  
Measuring  
What Matters**



### **SCORE launched new data-driven goals for Tennessee through 2030.**

Without a unified vision for student success from K-12 to career, Tennessee leaders and educators lacked clear goals and outcomes to aspire toward. SCORE launched TN2030, a data-driven vision for student success that highlights the potential for groundbreaking achievement in our state. Shared as a collaborative goalpost for statewide leaders in education, advocacy, and government, the TN2030 goals can

TN2030



[TN2030.org](https://TN2030.org)

be achieved in the next five years with just one more student per public school classroom, per year making progress. The key student milestones include third-grade English language arts, seventh-grade math, pursuit of postsecondary pathways, and completion of impact credentials. SCORE arrived at the goals through research, data analysis, and collaboration with key stakeholders. In addition, SCORE shared these goals at our 2025 State of Education event to build momentum and buy-in from cross-sector leaders.

## 2024 Higher Ed By the Numbers

SCORE published our biannual postsecondary data book to provide a snapshot of data across postsecondary preparation, persistence, and success. The key postsecondary metrics and areas for improvement highlighted in this data report helped inform our TN2030 goals.



2024 Higher Ed  
By the Numbers



## SCORE advocated for education-to-work alignment through increased data access and use.

For stakeholders at every level to monitor progress toward statewide student success goals and to make data-informed decisions, more robust and actionable data across the education-to-work continuum are needed. SCORE's advocacy for data access helped create three education-to-work public dashboards: the Office of Evidence and Impact's (OEI) Education to Employment and Postsecondary Enrollment and Completion dashboards and the Tennessee Board of Regents' (TBR) Careers Start Here dashboard. Additionally, by developing a data-driven framework to drive alignment between education and workforce opportunity, SCORE's Credential Impact Working Group process provided an exemplar for how data can be used to drive action. As a result, TBR updated the Career Starts Here dashboard to include wages and job outlook, two key data measures in SCORE's impact credential framework. These statewide dashboards provide valuable insights into students' progress from education to the workforce. Finally, OEI requested feedback from SCORE and subsequently published their first-ever Statewide Learning Agenda, which included workforce development and employment as priorities. These efforts highlight SCORE's role in advocating for how existing data can be used to create stronger connections between education and workforce outcomes.

2024 in Review

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

In addition to our impact on core priorities, SCORE shined a light on emerging issues that are deeply connected to student success in Tennessee.

**Mental health and student success in Tennessee:** SCORE partnered with NashvilleHealth to broaden awareness of the connections between health and student achievement in Tennessee, as well as to deepen understanding of related issues across both the education and public health communities. We convened more than 200 community leaders and advocates to discuss how students' ability to achieve is connected to their mental health at Connecting the Dots: Mental Health and Student Success in Tennessee. The event offered a platform to share innovative programs, best practices, and student-lived experiences from more than 30 national experts and statewide practitioners. The event also highlighted the SCORE-supported release of the Belmont Data Collaborative's new county-level data on mental well-being vulnerabilities in Tennessee.



Connecting the Dots: Mental Health and Student Success in Tennessee





**Generative AI:** As generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) use grows in capability and reach, so does its ability to support teaching and learning. In 2024, SCORE brought stakeholders together to explore AI’s potential in teaching and learning. This work has focused on understanding how educators can use AI to bolster teaching and improve sustainability within the profession, how students use AI to maximize their learning, how AI is unlocking career opportunities that are impacting Tennessee’s economy in real time, and how AI is impacting policies, learning standards, and technological advancements. SCORE convened national



**Unlocking AI: A  
Primer for Educators**

experts and Tennessee leaders in a working group to explore GenAI’s impact on education and career preparation through research and pilot evaluations in K-12 and higher education. Further, SCORE shared learnings from these discussions in presentations to the state’s AI Advisory Council and in a memo: *Unlocking AI: A Primer for Educators*.

# Prioritizing a Student-Focused Agenda in 2025



At the close of 2024, SCORE released its annual report, *2025 State of Education in Tennessee: Casting a Vision for Student Success*, outlining policy and practice recommendations for Tennessee K-12, postsecondary, and education-to-work pathways as the comprehensive student-focused agenda to advance outcomes for Tennessee students from kindergarten to career. In addition, this year's report included our TN2030 goals, which are new statewide goals for student success.

## 2025 State of Education in Tennessee Report Priorities

- Connect credentials and workforce opportunity
- Improve long-term student success through postsecondary funding
- Focus on high school pathways that prepare students for careers that enable economic independence
- Innovate to recruit and retain excellent educators
- Bolster access to high-quality public charter schools
- Recommit to the foundational K-12 policies that have advanced student success



**2025 State of Education  
in Tennessee: Casting a  
Vision for Student Success**

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[tnscore.org](https://tnscore.org)

[info@tnscore.org](mailto:info@tnscore.org)

615.727.1545

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