

THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE

A Report by

T E N N E S S E E
S C O R E

State Collaborative on Reforming Education

Senator Bill Frist, Chairman

JULY 2009



July 30, 2009

Dear Fellow Tennesseans,

Thank you for taking time to read the Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education's (SCORE) interim report on "The State of Education in Tennessee." I hope you find the report educational, engaging, and encouraging.

I started SCORE earlier this year to jumpstart long-term educational change in Tennessee and to ensure that every child graduates high school prepared for college or a career. Education is the most important issue in our state and nation. Our children are entering a workforce that is the most competitive we have seen in our lifetime. Our economy is truly global, and how well our students are learning is being measured on an international scale. As a surgeon, I know the impact education has on all aspects of our life, including health. A recent study I led for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that education is one of the best predictors of health outcomes such as life expectancy and infant mortality rate.

Over the past six months, SCORE has been working diligently to research the state of education in Tennessee. We have already held six statewide meetings at the First Amendment Center in Nashville where we have heard from leading education experts from in our state and around the country. Additionally, we have conducted hundreds of one-on-one interviews and held over 40 town hall meetings across the state, learning from local officials and educators about the successes they are having in their schools and the challenges they are facing.

This report is the first of two publications SCORE will release this year. This report's primary purpose is to provide a broad description of the K-12 education system in Tennessee and outline its relative strengths and weaknesses. While most of the data in this report has been collected and previously reported by others, the unique role of this report is to bring all this information together in a single place. By doing so, the hope is this report will assist the SCORE Steering Committee, policymakers, and educators across the state in thinking about how to improve Tennessee's K-12 education system in a strategic and comprehensive manner.

Later this year, SCORE will release a final report with recommendations for improving the state's K-12 education system. The final report will draw on findings from this interim report as well as our statewide and town hall meetings. I am confident our final report will build consensus about the path forward for Tennessee and identify ways that each group in our state—whether it be the next Governor, the legislature, educators, or the business community—can assist in moving our state's educational system forward.

This report would not be possible without the work and support of many people, and I thank them for their dedication to improving Tennessee's schools. I also thank you for your support and taking time to learn more about the state of education in Tennessee.

With warmest regards,

William H. Frist, M.D.

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Executive Summary

Education is the key to both Tennessee’s future and the future of every individual who lives in our great state. In a recent speech to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, President Barack Obama said, “We know that economic progress and educational achievement have always gone hand in hand in America...Let there be no doubt: the future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens.” The same is true for states – the future belongs to the states that best educate their citizens. These states will be more successful recruiting businesses and will be better able to control the costs of healthcare and other social services. Citizens living in these states will have more opportunities and live healthier and more prosperous lives.

No single metric can fully describe how well a state educates its citizens. However, one can gain a sense of a state’s performance by examining a range of outcomes, including national and state standardized test scores, ACT and SAT scores, graduation rates, and a state’s level of educational attainment. When one examines these metrics, one finds there are essentially none on which Tennessee ranks above the national average. Many argue this should be expected, as southern states generally rank relatively low on educational measures. However, even among states in the Southeast, Tennessee only ranks in the middle, consistently ranking behind North Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, and Virginia. It is clear Tennessee has significant room to improve – first among states in the Southeast and then among states across the nation.

Tennessee has some great assets on which to build. First and foremost is Tennessee’s tradition of strong education leadership. In the early 1980s, then-Governor Lamar Alexander’s devotion to education earned him recognition as the state’s “education governor.” Alexander’s Better Schools Program, while creating some controversy within Tennessee, was broadly recognized as a model for the rest of the country and was at least a partial reason President George H.W. Bush appointed Alexander to be U.S. Secretary of Education in 1991. In 1992, Governor Ned McWherter’s leadership helped pass the Tennessee Education Improvement Act. The law not only established the state’s Basic Education Program, which aims to equitably distribute education

funding across the state, but also created the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), which is still recognized today as one of the nation’s best longitudinal data systems.

Governor Bredesen has continued this tradition of strong education leadership, primarily by implementing the Tennessee Diploma Project, which raises the state’s standards and revises the state’s assessment tests to align with these standards. The Governor has also prioritized improving teacher quality, although several of his boldest efforts in this area are still in their development phase.

While many good things are happening in education across Tennessee, much work remains to be done to make Tennessee an education leader – first in the Southeast and then across the country. Specifically:

- Substantial work remains in providing districts, schools, and teachers the support they need to successfully implement the Tennessee Diploma Project. While the Tennessee Department of Education has provided teachers substantial training on the new standards, much work remains in helping superintendents and principals answer some of the legitimate questions the Diploma Project raises, especially about the role of career and technical education and how to identify, recruit, and train sufficient numbers of high-quality math and science teachers. Much more also remains to be done to educate the average Tennessean on the importance of the Diploma Project.

- The state lacks a comprehensive strategy for improving teacher quality. While there are some promising efforts, including the Governor’s task force on teacher effectiveness, the Tennessee Board of Regents’ Teacher Quality Initiative, and the State Board of Education’s Teacher Training Program Report Card, these efforts are piecemeal and do not represent a comprehensive strategy.
- The state has never systematically focused on creating a high-quality pipeline of superintendents and principals. Although the State Board of Education recently passed a policy that would in theory significantly improve the quality



WHILE MANY GOOD THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN EDUCATION ACROSS TENNESSEE, MUCH WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE TO MAKE TENNESSEE AN EDUCATION LEADER—FIRST IN THE SOUTHEAST AND THEN ACROSS THE COUNTRY.



of principal training, significant work remains in turning this policy into a reality.

- Tennessee has one of the best student data systems in the country. However, greater attention needs to be paid to ensuring policymakers, superintendents, principals, and teachers use this data to effectively design policies and improve classroom instruction.
- Tennessee could significantly expand learning opportunities for its students. Specifically, the state is still learning how to effectively deliver both online learning courses and courses that offer a seamless transition between high school and higher education. Although the state has made some initial efforts on both fronts, there is significant opportunity to grow and diversify these learning options.

Some districts are making bold efforts to improve student achievement in these and other areas. Thirty-four such “promising practices” are highlighted in this report on pages 44 through 51. Although it is too early for conclusive data to exist on many of these practices, they provide “promising” ideas from which others might learn.

This report concludes by examining how districts across the state are performing relative to one another. As one would expect, there is a strong relationship between student achievement and student demographic characteristics. However, many districts with varying student demographic characteristics are rapidly improving student achievement. This report highlights five of the highest-performing districts: Alcoa City, Clinton City, Trenton Special School District, Jefferson County, and Claiborne County. This report finds these districts (1) have targeted professional development opportunities for teachers that are embedded within schools and maintained over time (2) invest in training and developing strong school leaders (3) utilize data to improve teaching and learning and (4) provide supplemental services to support their most disadvantaged students.

As these districts illustrate, many good things are happening in education across Tennessee. However, Tennessee has a long way to go. SCORE’s final report, which will be released in late October, will provide specific recommendations for how the state can improve its K-12 education system in a strategic and comprehensive manner.



Courtesy of Teresa Suarez

Former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist visits with students after SCORE’s kick-off press conference at Fall Hamilton Elementary School in Nashville.



A Tradition of Education Reform

Tennesseans can proudly lay claim to a history of great education leaders and reform initiatives. Starting over three decades ago with legislation enacted by then-Governor Lamar Alexander, the state of Tennessee has implemented dozens of innovative programs, at times gaining significant national recognition.

Governor Lamar Alexander’s (1979-1987) devotion to education earned him recognition as the state’s “education governor.” As Governor, Alexander’s key initiative was the Better Schools Program. The program strengthened teacher certification requirements, created Governor’s schools for high-performing students, and lengthened the school year from 175 to 180 days. The element of the program that received the most attention was its teacher career ladder, which contained five “rungs” that teachers could achieve based on their level of training and accepting of additional responsibilities. When teachers advanced to a new rung, they were given additional compensation. During Alexander’s term, the state also funded the Tennessee Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio project, commonly known as the STAR class-size study. The \$12 million study randomly assigned students in grades K-3 to either classrooms of 13-17 students, classrooms of 22-25 students, or classrooms of 22-25 with an additional teacher aide. The study received national recognition and is still cited today in academic literature on class size. Because of his work in education as governor, Alexander was named President of the University of Tennessee in 1988 and was then appointed United States Secretary of Education by President George H.W. Bush in 1991. Today, Alexander serves on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee as the senior United States Senator from Tennessee.

Under Governor Ned McWherter (1987-1995), Tennessee laid the foundation for its current education funding and data systems. In 1990 and 1991, McWherter launched his Tennessee 2000 / 21st Century Classroom Education tour to gather ideas about ways to improve the state’s education funding model. At the same time, a series of



Governor Lamar Alexander talks with students during an event promoting his Better Schools Program.

Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives

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Tennessee Supreme Court decisions ruled the state’s existing education funding system was unconstitutional. In response, McWherter helped pass the Tennessee Education Improvement Act of 1992. The law established the Basic Education Program, which created a formula for equitably distributing education funding across the state (see description on pages 20-21). Additionally, the law funded the creation of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). Designed by then-University of Tennessee Professor William Sanders, TVAAS was the first data system in the country that could measure the progress students made from year-to-year. Today, TVAAS is widely recognized as one of the best longitudinal data systems in the United States.

Governor Phil Bredesen (2003-present) has continued this tradition of strong education leadership. In 2005, Bredesen rallied strong bipartisan support for his Pre-K initiative, which has appropriated \$213 million over the past four years to provide pre-school for 18,000 of the state's neediest four year-olds. Bredesen has also focused on ensuring Tennessee students graduate high school prepared for college or the workforce by working with the State Board of Education to pass the Tennessee Diploma Project, which set more rigorous high school graduation standards and created a new, more difficult statewide assessment test aligned with the new standards.

The Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) grew out of this rich statewide commitment to education. Building on the state's previous successes, SCORE



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RICH TRADITION OF
EDUCATION REFORM.**



aims to make Tennessee a national leader in education reform. By uniting stakeholders from the education, government, business, and philanthropic communities in a non-partisan forum, SCORE is an opportunity for true collaboration that builds on Tennessee's rich tradition of education reform. SCORE is committed to learning about all the great things happening in schools across Tennessee, sharing these successes across the state, and developing a plan for how the state can move forward. In light of the upcoming 2010 gubernatorial election, recent turnover in the legislature, and the elevated interest of the business and philanthropic communities in statewide education reform, the creation of SCORE could not be better timed to ensure that all the major stakeholders in Tennessee work together to sustain and elevate the state's commitment to education.



Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives

*Governor Ned McWherter signs the Tennessee Education Improvement Act on March 11, 1992.
The Act created both the BEP funding formula and the TVAAS data system.*



Why Education Matters for Tennessee

Education is the key to both Tennessee’s future and the future of every individual who lives in our great state. In a recent speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, President Obama emphasized the importance of education to our nation saying, “We know that economic progress and educational achievement have always gone hand in hand in America . . . [L]et there be no doubt: the future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens.” Education is and will continue to be the number one determinant of prosperity and well-being for each individual and community in our country and in our state.

The jobs available to young adults today require a very different level of education than the jobs that were available to their parents and grandparents. Over the past forty years, there has been a substantial decline in manufacturing and other blue-collar jobs that required relatively little formal education. At the same time, there has been a tremendous growth in service sector jobs, which require greater critical thinking and communication skills. These new jobs require a higher level of education than the blue-collar jobs they are replacing (see Figure 2.1). For example, eight of the ten occupations with the fastest projected growth between 2004 and 2014 require at least a bachelor’s degree or postsecondary vocational certificate. In contrast, none of the ten most rapidly declining occupations require any postsecondary education.¹ A recent report by ACT, Inc. found it is not only new jobs, but also the remaining blue-collar jobs, that are requiring more education. Specifically, the study found employers are increasingly expecting blue-collar workers, such as electricians, construction workers, and plumbers, to have at least an associate’s degree.²

There is no question the level of education an individual attains has significant implications for their own personal earnings. While an individual with a bachelor’s degree on average earns \$51,554, an individual with only a high

school diploma earns on average \$28,645. Currently, only 22 percent of the adult population in Tennessee has a bachelor’s degree or higher, resulting in many Tennesseans not being able to obtain the high-paying jobs they desire.³


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IN OUR GREAT STATE.**


Education also affects the economic well-being of every community in Tennessee. Research collected by the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research found that the ten counties with the largest recent job growth had on average 76 percent of adults with at least a high school diploma, while the ten counties with the least job growth had only 66 percent of adults with a high school diploma.⁴ Similarly, a recent study by McKinsey found that inequalities in education created “clusters of Americans largely unable to participate in the greater American economy due to a concentration of low skills, high unemployment, or high incarceration rates.”⁵ These clusters, which exist in many rural and urban areas in Tennessee, contain a disproportionate

number of people who are unable to compete for decent-paying jobs that can support a family. Not only does this make it very difficult for these individuals to make ends meet, but it also makes it very difficult for their communities to thrive.

Figure 2.1
Minimum Education Requirements for Growing Industries

At least an Associate’s Degree	At least a Bachelor’s Degree
Registered Nurse	Public Relations Manager
Computer Support Specialist	Loan Officer
Medical Records Technician	Industrial Engineer
Health Records Technician	Forester
Physical Therapy Assistant	Computer Software Engineer
Occupational Therapy Assistant	Sales Manager
Veterinary Technologist	Network Administrator

Source: Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Achieve, Inc.

Education influences more than simply individual wealth and economic growth—it also influences health and other social outcomes. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation study found that “education, not income or race, is the most important indicator of life span and health.”⁶ Specifically, the study found low educational attainment is associated with high rates of infectious disease, self-reported poor health, shorter survival after illness, and shorter life expectancy.⁷ There is also a strong connection between infant mortality rates and the mother’s level of education. A recent study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found the lower a mother’s educational level, the higher the incidence of newborn mortality. In fact, the study found the gap between the infant mortality rate of mothers with a graduate degree and mothers without a high school diploma was greater in Tennessee than in any other state in the country.⁸ Similarly, an Alliance for Excellent Education study estimated that “if the 1.2 million students who drop out each year earned high school diplomas instead, states could save

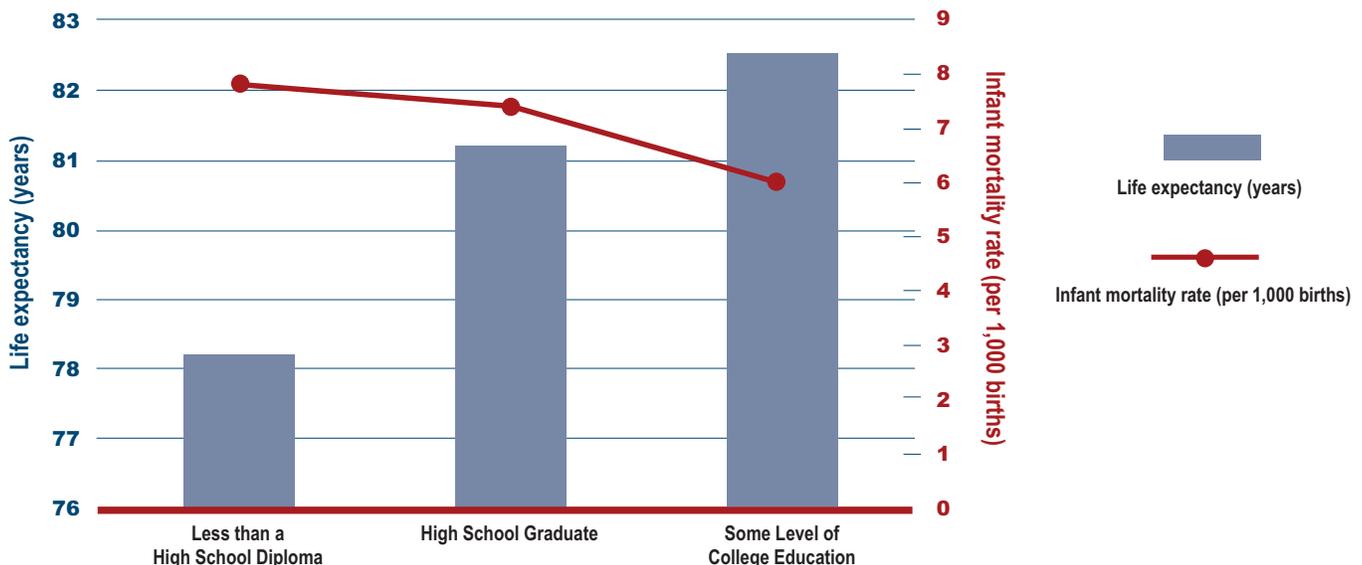

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\$17 billion in health-care costs over the graduates’ lifetimes.”⁹

An increased investment in education would also provide other positive benefits to society. For example, in 2004, 74.2 percent of college graduates voted while only 34.6 percent of individuals with less than a high school diploma did so. Similarly, of the 61 million Americans who volunteered in some capacity between 2005 and 2006, nearly 75 percent had some level of college education. There is also a strong relationship between low levels of education and negative social outcomes. While less than one percent of prison inmates have a college degree, 38 percent have only a high school diploma, and 54 percent have less than a high school diploma. Furthermore, over two-thirds of all high school dropouts will use food stamps at some point during their life.¹⁰

As this data illustrates, increasing student achievement and educational attainment in Tennessee will benefit not only the individuals who receive that education but also the communities in which those individuals live.

Figure 2.2
Relationship Between Educational Attainment and Health Outcomes



Source: University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



The State of Education in Tennessee

There is growing consensus across the country that educational outcomes should be the key metrics for determining the success of education reform efforts. As was discussed in the previous section, educational outcomes are strong predictors of a number of both individual and community long-term outcomes including economic growth, individual wage earnings, and health status. While inputs such as teacher quality and per pupil expenditure are important, the emerging consensus is these inputs only matter in the extent to which they drive changes in outcomes. Thus, this chapter will begin by discussing Tennessee’s educational outcomes relative to other states and then turn to examining Tennessee’s educational inputs.

No single metric can fully describe a state’s educational performance. However, one can gain a sense of a state’s overall performance by examining a range of educational outcomes including national and state standardized test scores, ACT and SAT scores, graduation rates, and a state’s level of educational attainment. When one examines these outcomes, one finds that Tennessee essentially never ranks above the national average. Many argue this should be expected as southern states generally rank low on education metrics. However, even among states in the Southeast, Tennessee does not perform particularly well. While Tennessee consistently ranks ahead of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, Tennessee consistently ranks behind North Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, and Virginia, as

Figure 3.1 illustrates. It is clear Tennessee has significant room to improve—first among states in the Southeast and then among states across the nation.

Tennessee has some strong blocks on which to build. Tennessee’s data system is among the best in the nation, and the new standards and assessments that are currently being implemented as part of the Tennessee Diploma Project will be among the best in the country. The state’s Pre-K system is also consistently rated as one of the strongest in the nation in terms of both quantity and quality, and the state’s accountability system adequately implements the provisions of No Child Left Behind (although it does not go far beyond these minimal federal requirements).¹¹

There are at least five areas on which Tennessee needs to focus much more effort. First, although the state Department of Education has done a commendable job providing professional development for teachers about the Tennessee Diploma Project, much work remains in helping superintendents and principals address some of the legitimate questions the Diploma Project raises, especially about the role of career and technical education and identifying sufficient numbers of high-quality math and science teachers. Moreover, much more needs to be done to educate the average Tennessean about the importance of the Diploma Project. Second, the state lacks a comprehensive strategy for improving teacher quality. While the state has recently launched several initiatives to address this challenge

Figure 3.1
Educational Outcomes in Southeastern States

	National Ranking						Demographics	
	2007 NAEP 4th grade reading and math scores	2007 NAEP 8th grade reading and math scores	Growth in NAEP score 1992 to 2007	High school graduation rate	Percent college freshman receiving Bachelor’s within six years	Percent 18-24 year olds enrolled in college	Percent free or reduced lunch students	Percent non-white students
Tennessee	41st	40th	17th	32nd	31st	37th	47.7%	30.9%
Florida	21st	35th	1st	47th	29th	32nd	45.2%	51.6%
Kentucky	32nd	33rd	11th	27th	36th	21st	51.2%	14.2%
North Carolina	29th	30th	1st	43rd	16th	29th	43.2%	42.5%
Virginia	7th	11th	11th	34th	9th	22nd	31.4%	40.7%

Note: Red indicates performance worse than Tennessee.

Sources: National Center for Educational Statistics; Education Week’s Diploma Counts; University of Tennessee’s Center for Business and Economic Research

including a Governor's task force on teacher effectiveness, the Tennessee Board of Regents' Teacher Quality Initiative, and the State Board of Education's Teacher Training Program Report Card, all these efforts are still in their nascent stages. Third, the state has never systematically focused on creating a high-quality pipeline of superintendents and principals. Although the State Board of Education recently passed a policy that in theory would significantly improve the quality of principal training, significant work remains to be done in turning this policy into a reality. Fourth, although Tennessee has one of the best student data systems in the country, more effort needs to be taken to ensure policymakers, superintendents, principals, and teachers use this data to effectively design policies and improve classroom instruction. Finally, Tennessee is only in the initial stages of learning how to effectively use technology in the classroom and creating a seamless transition between high school and higher education. Although the state has made some initial efforts in both these areas, much work remains to be done.

Educational Outcomes

There are two primary types of educational outcomes that can be measured and compared across states: student achievement and educational attainment. Student achievement refers to students' performance on standardized tests. Educational attainment refers to the level of education a student completes. This section will first discuss student achievement and then discuss educational attainment.

There are only two measures of student achievement that can be compared across states. The first is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national test given every two years to a representative sample of students in each state. States are required to participate in the NAEP in order to receive federal Title I funds. NAEP measures the achievement level of fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students in a variety of subjects including reading, math, science, social studies, and writing. However, states are only required to administer the fourth and eighth grade math and reading tests in order to receive federal funding. Figure 3.2 shows how each state performs on these tests. The graph shows a composite scale score for each state, a measure that was created by averaging each state's fourth and eighth grade reading and math scores.¹²

As Figure 3.2 illustrates, Tennessee ranks 41st in student achievement on the NAEP. Overall, the Southeast performs fairly poorly. With the exception of Virginia, whose average NAEP score places the state in ninth place nationally, not a single state in the Southeast scores in the top half. However, even among the eleven Southeastern states, Tennessee ranks

eighth, above only Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.ⁱ Besides Virginia, the other leading Southeastern states are North Carolina (29th), Florida (30th), and Kentucky (33rd).

The second measure of student achievement that can be compared across states is college entrance exams, specifically the ACT and the SAT. Tennessee students disproportionately take the ACT rather than the SAT. For example, in the 2007-08 school year, 88 percent of Tennessee high school seniors took the ACT.¹³ In many states, a much lower percentage of students take either the ACT or SAT. Therefore, it is important to only compare Tennessee's score to the scores of other states who have a high percentage of students taking either the ACT or SAT. Of the 25 states where at least either 70 percent of graduates took the SAT or 70 percent of graduates took the ACT in 2007-08, Tennessee's average score ranks 16th. Of the seven Southeastern states with at least 70 percent of graduates taking either the ACT or SAT, Tennessee ranks second. However, this ranking is deceptive as many of the highest performing Southeastern states, including North Carolina, Florida, and Virginia, did not have over 70 percent of their students take either the SAT or the ACT.

In addition to student achievement, educational outcomes can also be measured by educational attainment, which measures the timing and percentage of individuals receiving various education credentials such as high school diplomas, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees. Tennesseans are not earning education credentials at a competitive rate relative to the rest of the nation. The state ranks at or below the national average in all measures of educational attainment, including the statewide high school graduation rate, percent of young people enrolled in college, and college completion rate. In comparison to other Southeastern states, Tennessee ranks in the middle, having a slightly higher than average graduation rate but a below average percentage of young people enrolled in college and a below average college completion rate.

Tennessee has the nation's 32nd highest graduation rate, defined as the percent of entering high school freshmen who graduate within four years. State graduation rates range from 47.3 percent in Nevada to 82.1 percent in New Jersey. Tennessee's graduation rate of 69.5 percent is slightly above the national average of 69.2 percent. Compared to other Southeastern states, Tennessee ranks third behind Kentucky and Arkansas. Moreover, from 1996 to 2006, Tennessee's high

ⁱ The eleven states labeled as "Southeastern" in this report are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

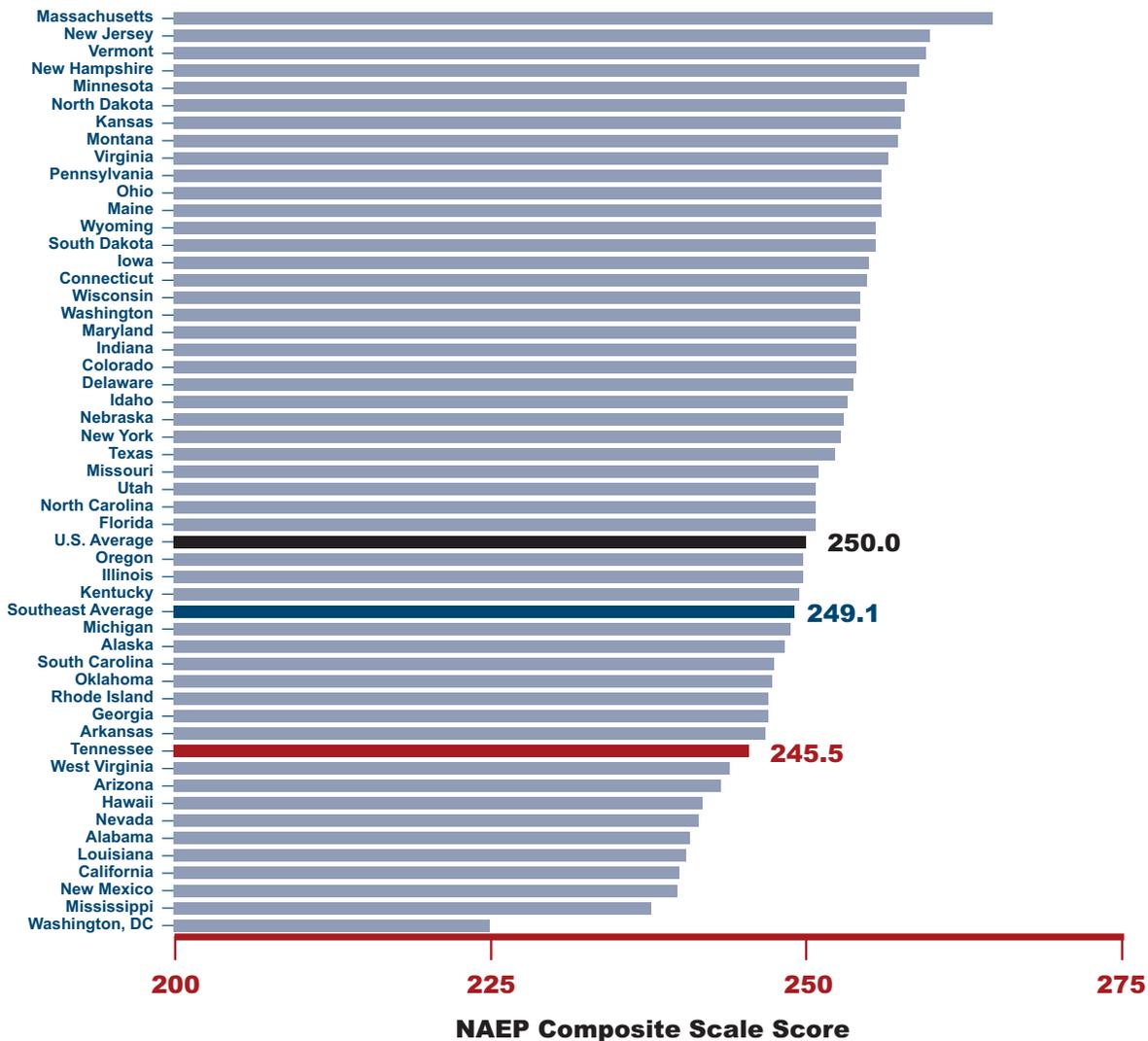
school graduation rate increased from 56.7 percent to 69.5 percent. This is the fastest increase in graduation rate of any state in the country except for South Carolina.¹⁴

Despite this improving high school graduation rate, Tennessee still ranks very low when examining postsecondary enrollment and completion rates. Of all the 18-24 year olds in Tennessee, only 31.9 percent are enrolled either full-time or part-time at either a community college or four-year institution. Tennessee

ranks 37th in the nation on this metric, below five other Southeastern states including Kentucky (21st), Virginia (22nd), Alabama (23rd), North Carolina (29th), and Florida (32nd).¹⁵

Even among those entering higher education with the hopes of completing a bachelor's degree, only about half actually receive their degree. Specifically, only 50.3 percent of all Tennessee's first-time, full-time undergraduates attending a four-year institution earn their bachelor's degree within six years of

Figure 3.2
State Performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007



Notes: Composite scale scores are the average of the fourth grade reading, fourth grade math, eighth grade reading, and eighth grade math scale scores.
Source: National Center for Educational Statistics

enrolling. Nationally, the average is 56.1 percent, resulting in Tennessee ranking 31st nationally on this metric. In comparison to other Southeastern states, Tennessee ranks fifth below Virginia (9th) North Carolina (16th), South Carolina (22nd), and Florida (29th).¹⁶

On the whole, this data shows Tennessee ranks significantly below the national average on almost all educational outcomes metrics. Perhaps just as concerning, Tennessee only ranks in the middle when compared with other Southeastern states, consistently ranking behind Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia.

The Achievement Gap

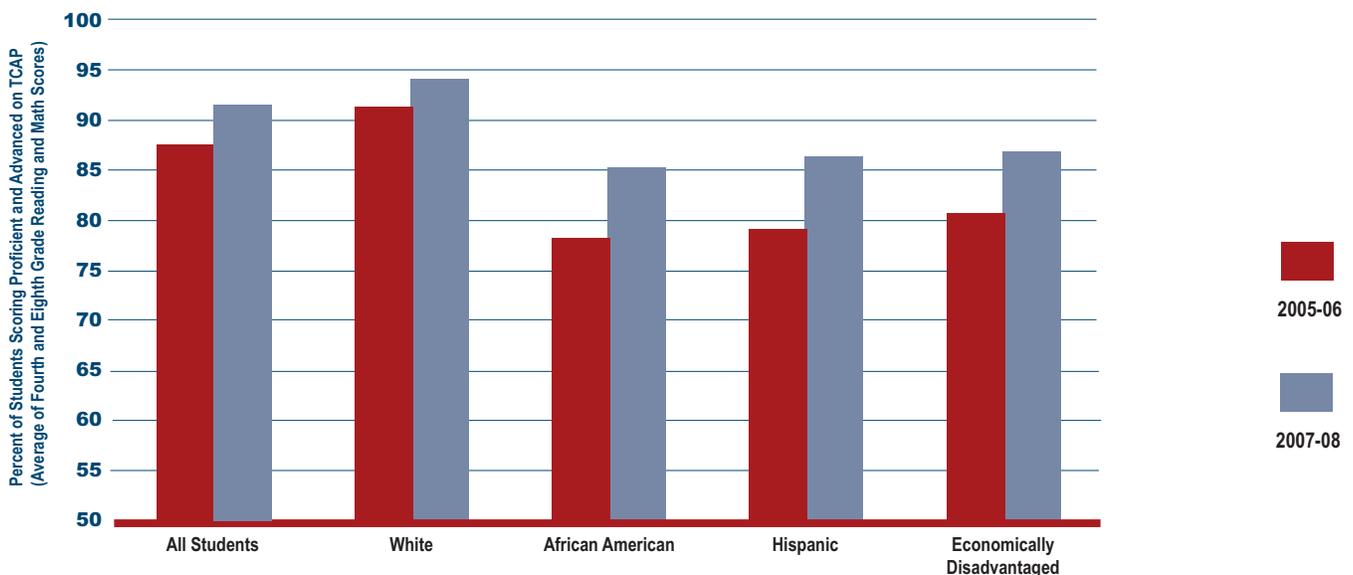
In almost every state and district across the country, there are significant differences in how various subgroups of students perform on educational outcome metrics. Tennessee is no exception. Within the state, African American and Hispanic students consistently perform worse than white and Asian students in terms of both student achievement and educational attainment. Similarly, students from lower socioeconomic classes perform significantly worse

than students from higher socioeconomic classes. Specifically, while 52.8 percent of white third through eighth graders scored advanced in math on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), only 34.7 percent of Hispanic, 26.1 percent of African American, and 31.4 percent of economically disadvantaged students did so. Similarly, while the high school graduation rate for white students was 85.6 percent, the graduation rate for Hispanic students was 73.1 percent, and the graduation rate for African American students was 71.6 percent.¹⁷

The good news is Tennessee is slowly closing the achievement gap. For example, when one examines eighth grade TCAP math scores, one finds the percent of white students scoring proficient or advanced on the test increased 3.4 percent from 2005-06 to 2007-08 while the percent of African Americans scoring proficient increased 9.1 percentage points, the percent of Hispanic students scoring proficient increased 9.7 points, and the percent of economically disadvantaged students scoring proficient increased 8.0 points. The achievement gap closed in similar ways if one exams fourth grade reading, fourth grade math, and eighth grade reading TCAP scores, as Figure 3.3 illustrates.


**AMONG STATES IN THE
SOUTHEAST, TENNESSEE
CONSISTENTLY RANKS
BEHIND FLORIDA,
KENTUCKY, NORTH
CAROLINA, AND VIRGINIA.**


Figure 3.3
The Achievement Gap in Tennessee



Source: Tennessee Department of Education

Standards

Business leaders and college deans alike agree far too many high school students are graduating without the skills they need to be successful in college or the workforce. Research has shown that high school graduation standards that are rigorous and well aligned with real world demands are essential for ensuring students graduate high school prepared for college or the workforce.¹⁸ This research has also shown that for standards to be most effective, a state must align its statewide assessment tests, human capital strategies, and other state policies with its standards.¹⁹

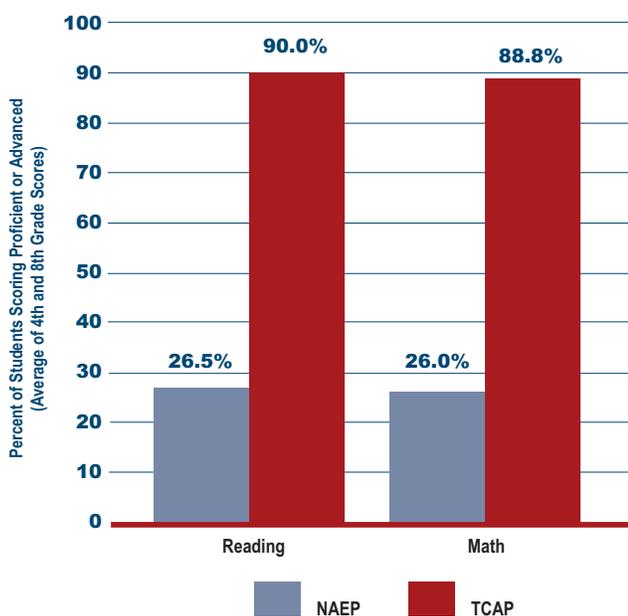
In 2005, it became clear Tennessee had some of the lowest standards in the country when Tennessee was one of two states to receive an “F” for “Truth in Advertising About Student Proficiency” on a United States Chamber of Commerce report.²⁰ The


**“TENNESSEE SHOULD BE
 COMMENDED FOR IMPROVING
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 RECORD TIME.”**
 – MIKE COHEN, PRESIDENT,
ACHIEVE, INC.


report cited Tennessee for having the largest gap between the percentage of students that were proficient in reading and math on state exams and the percentage of students that were proficient in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). While around 90 percent of Tennessee students were labeled proficient on state reading and math TCAP tests, only around 26 percent of students were labeled proficient on NAEP reading and math tests (Figure 3.4).ⁱⁱ

In response to this report, in 2007 Governor Bredesen and the Tennessee State Board of Education launched the Tennessee Diploma Project (TDP), an offshoot of the American Diploma Project (ADP). Founded by Achieve, Inc., ADP is an effort to encourage states to create high academic standards and align them with a rigorous curricula and assessment test.²¹ TDP has three main components.

Figure 3.4
Comparison of Tennessee Proficiency on TCAP and NAEP in 2007



Source: Tennessee Department of Education; National Center for Educational Statistics

First, TDP redesigned high school graduation requirements. As Figure 3.5 illustrates, the new requirements will likely necessitate a total of 22 credits for graduation instead of 20 credits. The number of required math credits has been increased from three to four, which now must include courses in Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and another higher level math course. Although, there will still be three required credits for science, students will now have to take either chemistry or physics in addition to biology. The new requirements also include 1.5 credits in physical education and wellness, half a credit in personal finance, two credits in foreign language, and one credit in fine arts—none of which were required under the old graduation standards. These new graduation requirements will go into effect for students starting high school in Fall 2009.

Second, TDP is implementing a new TCAP assessment test that will be better aligned with NAEP so that the percent of students who are proficient on the TCAP will better reflect the percent of students who are proficient on the NAEP. The test was piloted in Spring 2009 and will be rolled out in Spring 2010.

Third, there will be a new set of tests for eighth grade and high school students. Starting in the 2009-10 school year, all eighth

ⁱⁱ This is in part because the TCAP was significantly easier than the NAEP but also because TCAP had only three levels of performance (not proficient, proficient, and advanced) while NAEP had four (not proficient, basic, proficient, and advanced).

and tenth grade students will take tests to evaluate whether or not they are “on track to meet Tennessee’s college and career-ready graduation requirements.” Eleventh graders will then be required to take either the SAT or ACT. In addition, there will be end-of-course tests in ten core high school subjects with the exam scores being incorporated into the student’s final course grade. The subjects with end-of course tests will be English I, II, and III; Algebra I and II; Geometry; U.S. History; Biology I; Chemistry; and Physics. These end-of-course tests are still being created but will eventually replace the high-stakes Gateway exam that students currently must take to graduate high school.

The challenge Tennessee now faces is successfully implementing TDP and ensuring that students, teachers, parents, and other key stakeholders are well-informed about the new standards and that principals, teachers, and instructional supervisors are prepared to support the new standards. Using a \$5 million grant, the Tennessee Department of Education has implemented significant professional development opportunities to train teachers and instructional supervisors about the new standards. To date, over 15,000 educators have been trained through the state’s Spring Content Knowledge Institute, eleven three-day standard training sessions for teachers, and a one-day summer institute tailored specifically toward principals, instructional supervisors, and accountability supervisors.

Despite these professional development opportunities, three challenges remain to successful implementation. First, very little has been done to educate parents, community leaders, and local government officials about the new standards. This could become problematic when the new assessment is rolled out in Spring 2010 because schools previously meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) may not meet AYP under the new assessments and graduation requirements. Second, the new high school requirements will require additional high school math and science teachers. Although the state is developing online high school math and science courses to partially address this challenge (see pages 30-31), much work remains to be done to identify how the state will ensure there is an ample supply of math and science teachers to teach these additional math and science classes. Third, there needs to be further consideration about how high schools will be able to continue career and technical education in a manner consistent with TDP.

In addition to TDP, in June 2009 Tennessee agreed to participate in the Common Core State Standards Initiative, an initiative by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop common standards for 46 states. At the time of publication, it was still unclear how this Initiative will affect the implementation of the Tennessee Diploma Project.²²

Figure 3.5
Tennessee’s New High School Graduation Requirements

	Current Requirements	Requirements for Students Entering High School in 2009 or After
Math	3 credits including Algebra I,	4 credits including Algebra I, Algebra II or Geometry Algebra II, Geometry, and a fourth higher level course*
Science	3 credits including Biology	3 credits including Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and another lab science
English	4 credits	4 credits
Social Studies	3 credits	3 credits
Wellness / Physical Education	1 credits	1.5 credits
Personal Finance	0 credits	0.5 credits
Elective Focus	6 credits	2 foreign language credits 1 fine art credit** 3 elective focus credits***
Total Credits	20	22

* This fourth higher level math course can include courses specifically designed to meet the needs of Career and Technical education students

** May be waived for students not going to a university to expand and enhance the elective focus

*** There are six areas of elective focus: math and science, career and technical education, fine arts, humanities, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)

Accountability

Accountability systems are focused on measuring student achievement using standardized assessment tests and then rewarding, sanctioning, and supporting districts, schools, teachers, and students based on how students perform on those assessments. North Carolina and Texas were among the first states to create statewide accountability systems in the early 1990s. However, with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, every state was required to develop an accountability system that disaggregated student performance by subgroup.²³

While some states, such as Florida and North Carolina, have developed an accountability system that goes beyond these minimum federal requirements, Tennessee for the most part has not. The only exception is that Tennessee was one of the first two states to request permission from the U.S. Department of Education to use value-added data, rather than absolute achievement data, to measure whether schools and districts met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB.

As Figure 3.6 shows, the vast majority of schools in Tennessee are meeting AYP. Specifically, 1,318 of the state's 1,718 schools, or 77 percent of schools, met AYP in the 2007-08 school year. However, ten schools are in Restructuring I and four schools are in Restructuring II, which means they have failed to meet AYP for five and six consecutive years respectively. Additionally, three Memphis schools are in reconstitution plans and not yet improving, meaning they have failed to meet AYP for seven or more consecutive years. There are also five high priority districts, the lower-performing of which are Davidson County, which is in Restructuring I, and Madison County, which is in Corrective Action.

A key component of a strong accountability system is the incorporation of rewards, sanctions, and support for districts, schools, and teachers based on their performance. While Tennessee does a fairly good job assisting low-performing districts and schools, it stops short of placing heavy sanctions on struggling schools and gives very few rewards to the highest performing schools.

Figure 3.6
Standing of Tennessee Schools Under No Child Left Behind

NCLB Status	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Good Standing	1,325	1,378	1,318
Target	213	106	172
School Improvement I	28	58	27
School Improvement I - Improving	1	13	35
School Improvement II	21	15	25
School Improvement II - Improving	12	11	11
Corrective Action	12	14	5
Corrective Action - Improving	0	3	9
Restructuring I	0	8	6
Restructuring I - Improving	1	0	4
Restructuring II (Alt. Governance)	4	0	4
Restructuring II - Improving	2	2	0
State/LEA Reconstitution Plan I	9	3	1
State/LEA Reconstitution Plan I - Improving	3	5	2
State/LEA Reconstitution Plan II	2	5	1
State/LEA Reconstitution Plan II - Improving	0	2	3
State/LEA Reconstitution Plan III	0	0	1
N<10 –Small School Review	0	14	20

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

One strategy for continuously driving improvement in all Tennessee districts and schools is the Tennessee Comprehensive Systemwide Planning Process (TCSPP) and the Tennessee School Improvement Planning Process (TSIPP). TCSPP and TSIPP respectively require districts and schools to periodically develop improvement plans, with districts and schools that have failed to meet AYP for two consecutive years being required to review and revise their TCSPP or TSIPP annually. Although all schools must have an improvement plan and school improvement plans must mirror districts' improvement plans, it is unclear how much real change these planning processes drive in school buildings and individual classrooms.

The state has several programs focused solely on supporting both high-priority districts and high-priority schools. The state's primary support for high-priority districts is the state's System Targeted Assistance Teams (STATs). Started in 2007, STAT teams are composed of experienced superintendents, principals, and teachers who work with high-priority districts to implement their TCSPP. STAT consultants play a variety of roles including helping identify professional development needs, promoting best practices, and helping district leaders decide how to allocate resources across schools. Although effective and of high quality, these teams are stretched very thin across multiple districts.²⁴

The state also has several programs for assisting low-performing schools. When schools have failed to meet AYP for one year and become target schools, the Department of Education's nine field service centers (see details on page 37) work closely with these schools to develop and implement their TSIPP. If a school fails to meet AYP for a second year and enters School Improvement I, the school is assigned an Achievement Gap Elimination (AGE) consultant to visit and assist the school on a more regular basis.

If schools fail to meet AYP for a third year and enter School Improvement II, the state implements the much more intensive

Tennessee Exemplary Educator program, which is administered by the non-profit Edvantia, Inc. Exemplary Educators (EEs), the majority of whom are retired teachers with records of success, go through a rigorous selection process. Typically, a team of eight to ten EEs will spend 100 days at a low-performing school assessing its challenges by working with school leaders to observe practices in the school and analyze TCAP scores, graduation rates, and other data. EEs can then perform a variety of functions to try and assist schools, including modeling innovative teaching strategies, serving as mentors for teachers, helping instructional staff analyze student performance data, and providing appropriate professional development. After 100 days, EEs have several meetings with the school to recommend areas for improvement. The team monitors the school's progress on these recommendations until the end of the year, at which point the EE team prepares an end-of-year status report summarizing the school's progress, strengths, and areas in need of improvement. Since 2001, the program has trained 180 EEs and assisted 276 schools in 26 districts. With the help of EEs, 180 schools have moved off the target list. However, informal discussions suggest the success of EEs varies somewhat across the state depending upon the quality of the individual EE. Nonetheless, the program was one of only two educational programs in the nation to receive Harvard University's Top 50 Innovations in American Government Award in 2007.



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SHORT OF PLACING
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AND GIVES VERY FEW
REWARDS TO THE HIGHEST
PERFORMING SCHOOLS.**



Tennessee has very few rewards for high-performing schools. The primary reward programs are the federal Title I Distinguished Schools Recognition Program and the federal Blue Ribbon Schools Recognition Program, both of which reward schools that both have large percentages of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and high levels of absolute student achievement. While these federal programs are nice recognitions, the state of Tennessee offers no additional state-level recognitions. Moreover, unlike Florida, North Carolina, and several other states, Tennessee does not give financial rewards to high-performing schools.

Data Systems

The development and use of data systems play a critical role in improving the quality of education for students. Statewide longitudinal data systems can enhance a state’s ability to effectively use, accurately manage, and analyze education trends and patterns. In the classroom, longitudinal data systems can help teachers identify and address the needs of individual students.²⁵ While Tennessee has one of the best longitudinal data systems in the country, the state’s data system is grossly underutilized by most teachers, administrators, and policymakers across the state.

Created in 1992, the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) collects annual achievement data for students in grades three through eight in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies. Data is extracted at the student level,


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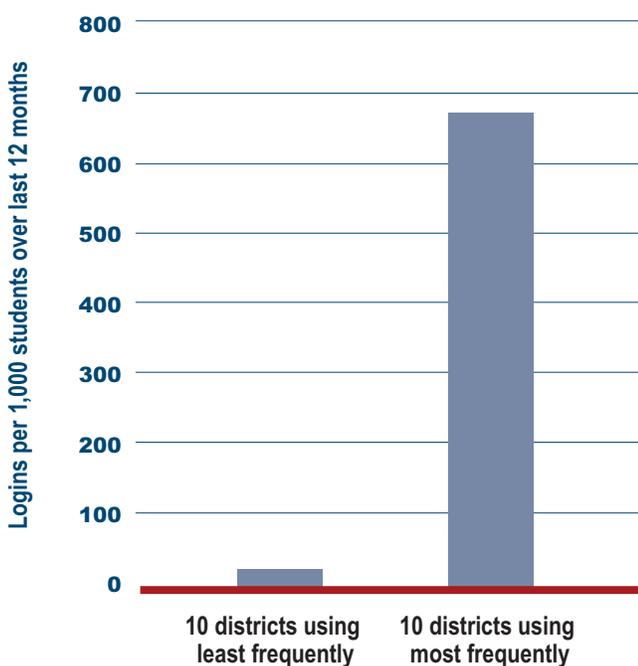

so that scores can be linked to student demographic characteristics as well as a student’s specific teacher and school. TVAAS follows the progress of individual students over time, allowing the system to estimate the effect schooling has on a student’s academic progress each year. Value-added scores can also be created for districts, schools and teachers based on the achievement gains of the students for which they are responsible.

TVAAS was revolutionary at the time it was created because it was the first value-added data system in the country. As a value-added system, TVAAS was able to measure how much a student learned and the effectiveness of individual districts, schools, and teachers regardless

of the students’ initial level of achievement. This was a significant improvement over earlier data systems that had only been able to measure students’ raw achievement level, which is highly correlated with students’ initial level of achievement and demographic characteristics. By measuring student gains rather than absolute levels of achievement, TVAAS allows for comparisons to be made about the effectiveness of schools and teachers serving students with very different initial levels of achievement.

However, there are at least four downsides to the current state of Tennessee’s data system. First, some educators and policymakers in Tennessee are concerned about the accuracy of TVAAS scores, largely in part because these individuals have not had the chance to fully understand and examine how the scores are calculated. Although some academics have questioned the reliability of TVAAS for a number of highly technical reasons, the accuracy and reliability of its student projections was fully vetted by the federal government’s General Accounting Office in 2006 when Tennessee applied to use TVAAS as the basis of its compliance with No Child Left Behind. Beginning as early as 1995, others have reviewed TVAAS and found the data used is consistent with the model’s assumptions and that the software performs the calculations accurately.²⁶ Additionally, despite the myth that TVAAS’s methodology is a “secret,” the specific methodology utilized in TVAAS was published in 1997.²⁷ Since that time others, including the RAND Corporation, have replicated the TVAAS model and found comparable results. However, data on TVAAS’s reliability and how TVAAS scores are created needs to be made more readily available to key stakeholders across Tennessee.

Figure 3.7
TVAAS Data Usage



Source: Tennessee Department of Education; National Center for Educational Statistics

The second and arguably biggest challenge to the state's data system is getting superintendents, principals, teachers, and policymakers to use TVAAS effectively. Usage of TVAAS varies widely across districts. As Figure 3.7 shows, the ten districts that access TVAAS data most frequently logged on to the TVAAS database an average of 676 times per 1,000 students over the past year, while the ten districts that use the TVAAS database most infrequently only logged on an average of 26 times per 1,000 students. These numbers are not particularly surprising given that superintendents must choose whether to give access to TVAAS data to their principals, who in turn must choose whether to give access to their teachers. This structure ultimately results in many principals and teachers not having access to TVAAS data for students in their school or classroom.

Moreover, even when an educator has access to TVAAS data, there is very little training for how to use it effectively. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education only has one part-time staff person dedicated to training teachers across the entire state on how to use TVAAS data to improve instruction. Although existing state law allows TVAAS scores to be used in teachers' evaluations, many principals do not use the data for this purpose. Furthermore, TVAAS data is not connected to many other important decisions that affect teachers, including tenure and compensation. While there are several downsides to making TVAAS the sole determinant of such policies, many other states have made student performance data a piece of the solution.

A third challenge is that the state does not provide data to teachers and principals in a timely manner. Although TCAP testing takes place in April, it is often late summer before districts and teachers see how their students performed. Moreover, while the TCAP serves as a summative assessment that measures student progress at the end of the year, the state

does not have a formative assessment system that measures students' progress throughout the year. Several states have created formative assessment systems that individual districts can voluntarily use to monitor their students' performance throughout the year. These formative assessment systems allow teachers to constantly adjust instruction to meet the needs of individual students.

Finally, there are still several education databases maintained by the State Department of Education that are not integrated into the TVAAS data system. These include databases on teacher certification and teacher employment patterns. Other states have funded the integration of these databases through the U.S. Department of Education's Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant program. Although Tennessee received one of these federal grants for \$3.2 million in December 2005, the state has yet to complete the integration of its databases. To partially address this problem, the Governor's office has contracted with University of Tennessee Professor William Fox to develop a statewide teacher data warehouse that will include teacher-level, longitudinal data that tracks teachers from their entry into higher education through their employment in the school system.

This database will help the state perform teacher supply and demand studies.

Thus, while Tennessee has one of the best longitudinal data systems in the country, much remains to be done to ensure that this system is used effectively to inform both policy and classroom instruction. Moreover, there are several ways the state's data system could be enhanced, including providing educators more real-time data on student achievement and integrating all the state's education databases into a single data warehouse.



**MUCH REMAINS TO BE
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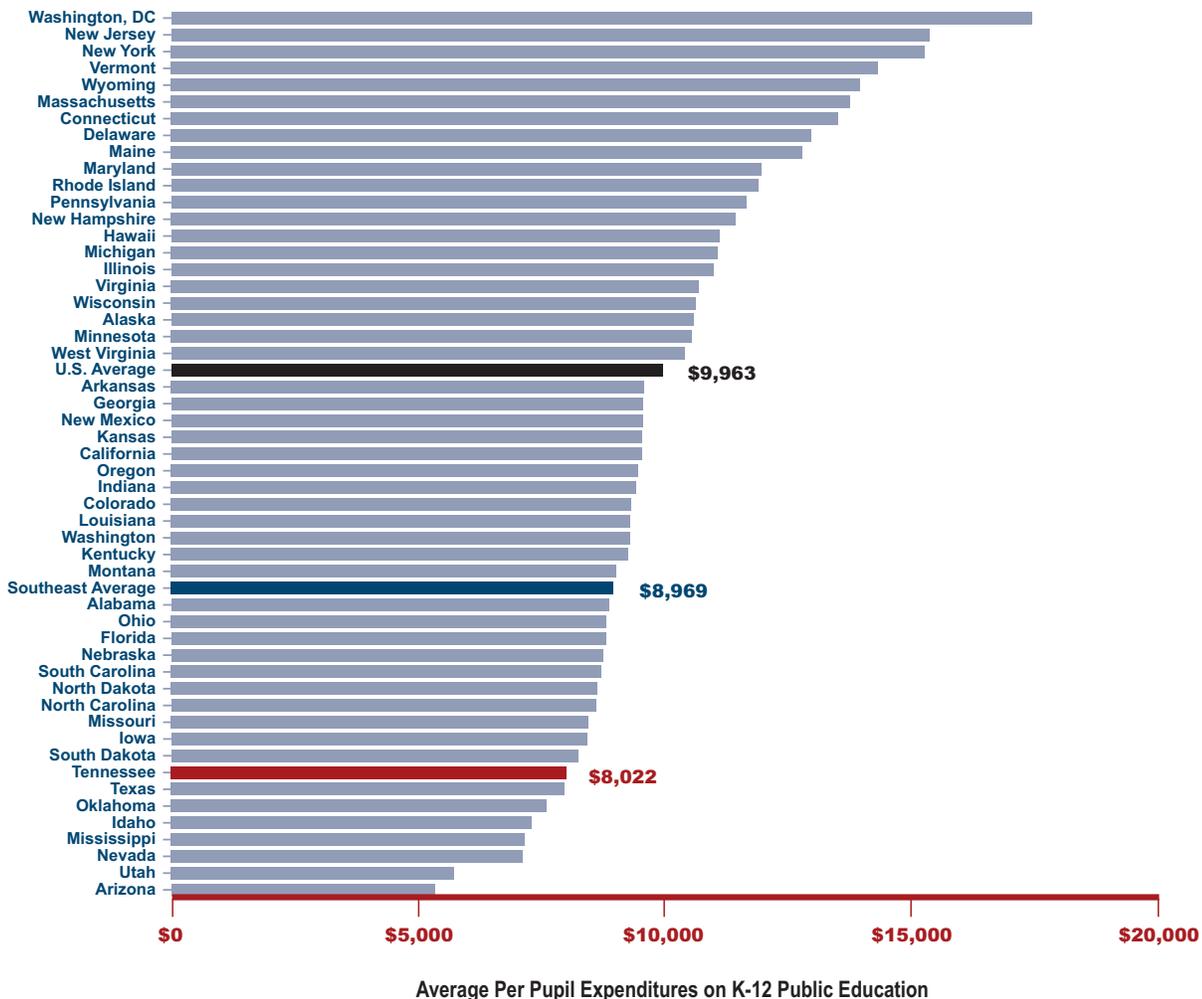
School Funding

The maintenance and improvement of public schools requires both sufficient funding and the appropriate allocation of resources. Adequate school funding levels are at the core of many education policy debates. However, among researchers, there is an ongoing debate about the effect of per pupil spending on student achievement. Although there are some variations in opinion, the broad consensus is that the most important question to consider is how education funds are spent rather than simply what level of education funding is available. While additional funds may be necessary to fund specific programs or positions that increase student achievement, research suggests simply increasing overall educational expenditures does not automatically increase student achievement.²⁸

As Figure 3.8 illustrates, Tennessee ranks 44th in the nation in per pupil expenditures, with an average per pupil expenditure of \$8,022. This is \$1,941 below the national average of \$9,963 and ranks second to last in the Southeast, above only Mississippi.²⁹ At \$45,030, Tennessee’s average teacher salary also falls significantly below the national average of \$52,308. This results in Tennessee’s average teacher salary ranking 40th in the nation, again ranking second to last in the Southeast ahead of only Mississippi.³⁰

Tennessee uses the Basic Education Program (BEP) to determine the state’s level of funding for each district. Created as part of the Tennessee Education Improvement Act of 1992,

Figure 3.8
State Per Pupil Spending on K-12 Education, 2007-08



Source: National Center for Educational Statistics

the BEP is a very complex formula that can best be described in four steps. First, the formula calculates the educational inputs each district needs to provide an adequate education for its students. For example, each district gets one teaching position for every 20 students in grades K-3 and one social worker for every 2,500 students in grade K-12 (see Figure 3.9). Second, the state estimates the cost of each input. For instance, the current formula assumes each teaching position costs \$38,000 and that each district needs \$69.44 per pupil for textbooks. Third, the state determines the average share of each expense it will pay. Currently, the state pays on average 70 percent of instructional expenses, 75 percent of classroom expenses, and 50 percent of non-classroom expenses. Finally, the state decides what proportion of these expenses it will pay for each district based on the district's ability to provide local funding from both property and sales taxes. For example, while the state only provides 28.3 percent of Franklin Special School District's total funding, the state provides 77.2 percent of Alamo City's total funding. The state provides lump-sum payments to each district for the entire amount the district is owed under BEP.

In 2007, BEP 2.0 was passed into law as Public Chapter 369. BEP 2.0 both revised the original BEP funding formula and

infused approximately \$205 million new dollars into K-12 education. Specifically, BEP 2.0 increased funding for both at-risk students and English language learners. It also increased the average state share of funding for instructional expenses from 65 percent to 70 percent, with the intention of raising the state's share to 75 percent once BEP 2.0 is "fully funded." The formula also decreased by 50 percent the cost differential factor, which was initially created in 1992 to compensate systems in higher wage markets for the higher salaries they had to pay teachers. However, this factor was deemed to be somewhat outdated when it was revisited in 2007.

To ensure the BEP stays up-to-date, the state has created a BEP Review Committee, which meets annually to make both short- and long-term recommendations for improving the BEP. For example, the 2008 BEP Review Committee report recommended a continued phase-in of Public Chapter 369's BEP 2.0 funding; providing additional funding for assistant principals, nurses, and technology coordinators; increasing the funding for teacher materials and supplies by \$100; and adding a new BEP component to fund professional development and mentoring. Over the long-term, the BEP committee recommended increasing the pay for teachers, principals, and assistant principals to the Southeastern average for each position.

Figure 3.9
Selected BEP Components and Funding Levels

Non-Instructional Positions	Funding Level
Principals	.5 per school < 225 1 per school > 225
Assistant Principals Elementary	.5 per school 660-879 1 per school 880-1,099 1.5 per school 1,100-1,319 2 per school > 1,320
Assistant Principals Secondary	.5 per school 300-649 1 per school 650-999 1.5 per school 1,000-1,249 2 per school > 1,250 (+ 1 per add'l 250)
System-Wide Instructional Supervisors	1 per < 500 total ADM 2 per 500-999 total ADM 3 per 1,000-1,999 total ADM 3 per > 2,000 total ADM (+ 1 per add'l 1,000)
Special Education Supervisors	1 per 750 special education I & S
Vocational Education Supervisors	1 per 1,000 vocational education FTEADM
Special Education Assessment Personnel	1 per 600 special education I & S
Social Workers	1 per 2,000 total ADM
Psychologists	1 per 2,500 total ADM

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

Leadership

Superintendents and principals are critical to the success of their districts and schools. As with teachers, research has shown it is critical to have a comprehensive strategy for recruiting, training, developing, evaluating, and compensating both superintendents and principals. Although Tennessee has several building blocks in place for creating these comprehensive systems, including having just approved one of the highest-quality principal development policies in the country, Tennessee has a long way to go in making comprehensive systems of superintendent and principal development a reality.

Superintendents

Superintendents' most important tasks are casting a vision for their district, aligning resources behind that vision, and recruiting strong principals, teachers, and central office staff who can execute that vision. Since running a school system is very different from any other job in a school district, new superintendents need a range of supports. Even experienced superintendents often find formal supports useful when they include practical advice about how to deal with common challenges, such as identifying ways to effectively implement statewide policies and programs.

Historically, superintendents have had two primary supports. First, the Tennessee Department of Education, the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS), and the Association of Independent and Municipal Schools (AIMS) host a series of conferences for superintendents throughout the year.ⁱⁱⁱ These multi-day conferences are used to inform superintendents about new state policies or legislative initiatives and provide various professional development opportunities. Second, every superintendent in the state is part of a regional superintendent study council, which meets regularly and gives superintendents the opportunity to share best practices and learn from other superintendents in their region. Although these supports are helpful, there has been broad recognition among superintendents that a more comprehensive system of supports is needed, especially for new superintendents and superintendents working to improve their skills in certain areas.

ⁱⁱⁱ TOSS is the statewide organization for all 136 superintendents in Tennessee. AIMS is an additional association for the 41 superintendents serving in municipal or special school districts.

To this end, three new programs have been launched in the past few years. To develop a pipeline of strong superintendents, TOSS, the Tennessee School Boards Association, and the Niswonger Foundation partnered together in 2007 to create the Prospective Superintendents Academy. The Academy provides sixteen training sessions for individuals from a variety of professions who are interested in potentially becoming superintendents. The sessions include numerous hands-on projects and conclude with each candidate developing a portfolio illustrating their skills.³¹ Although only in its third year and thus still exploring ways to best deliver its training, the Academy is a great first step in creating a pipeline of strong superintendent candidates.

To provide sustained professional development for new superintendents, TOSS and AIMS are currently in discussions about creating a mentoring program for new superintendents, where an existing superintendent would provide one-on-one mentoring to each new superintendent in the state. As part of the program, mentors would visit their mentee's district multiple times. TOSS and AIMS are hoping to launch this mentor program in Fall 2009. Finally, TOSS and the Niswonger Foundation are partnering to develop

online professional development courses for both new and experienced superintendents. These courses are just in the initial development phases, and all sides acknowledge much work remains to ensuring the courses deliver content superintendents find most helpful.

Evaluation and compensation mechanisms for superintendents are typically negotiated by each individual school district, with many superintendents' contracts including the possibility of bonuses if the district meets certain performance targets.

Principals

Strong principals are critical to developing and retaining highly effective teachers and implementing school-based reform strategies. Recent research has concluded that principals need to not only be strong operational managers but also strong "instructional leaders," who can help develop the skills of teachers in their building. Over the past two years, there has been recognition among policymakers in Tennessee that principals are not receiving the type of training and professional


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development opportunities they need to be most successful. Specifically, superintendents, principals, and teachers have made it clear they view most existing administrative training programs as largely ineffective. This is at least in part because many teachers enter these programs not because they want to be administrators but simply because they want to receive a salary increase, as having an administrative license significantly increases a teacher's salary on the state salary schedule even if the teacher does not actually become an administrator.

To address these problems, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Education worked with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to develop and approve a new comprehensive principal development policy, called the Learning Centered Leadership (LCL) system. On paper, the policy, which took four years to develop, is one of the best principal development policies in the country. The core of the system is the new Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS), which outline four levels of mastery on each of the seven competency areas outlined in the standards. These four levels of mastery correspond to the


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four new levels of principal licenses: the aspiring license (ILL-A), the beginning license (ILL-B), the professional license (ILL-P), and the exemplary license (ILL-E). Districts are required to sign “partnership agreements” with higher education institutions outlining how the district and higher education institution will work together to develop principal preparation programs that prepare leaders to meet these new standards. These new programs must include meaningful field-experiences and individual mentors for each principal candidate. The LCL system also includes a new evaluation tool that contains a detailed rubric outlining what aspiring, beginning, professional, and exemplary mastery look like on each dimension of the standards.³²

While Tennessee is fortunate to have a new policy around leadership development, the challenge will be transferring this policy into practice. The state has several blocks on which to build. First, all supervisors, principals, and assistant principals in the state are required every two years to attend 28 hours of professional development approved by the Tennessee Department of Education's Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL). In addition to improving districts' and other organizations' professional development programs, TASL itself runs several professional development programs, including intensive training programs for new supervisors, principals, and assistant principals. As with most professional development opportunities, informal discussions suggest the quality of TASL-approved programs varies widely. A second building block is the new online training modules for principals currently being developed in partnership by the Tennessee Principals Association and the Niswonger Foundation. These training modules are still in the very early phases of development, and all parties agree they will need to be supplemented by on-the-ground mentoring and training. Finally, many of the state's largest districts have either created or are considering creating comprehensive principal training programs. Several of these programs are highlighted as statewide “promising practices” on page 48. Together, these programs could become the infrastructure for regional principal development programs that together serve the entire state.



Courtesy of Chris Walker

Knox County Schools Superintendent and SCORE Steering Committee member Jim McIntyre tours a class at Holston Middle School on May 5, 2009.

Teacher Recruitment, Preparation, and Support

Research has conclusively shown that teachers are one of the most important determinants of a student's level of achievement. Research has also shown that teachers vary quite drastically in their effectiveness (as measured by students' achievement gains) and that the most effective teachers disproportionately teach high-income, high-achieving students rather than the most disadvantaged students.³³

There are several challenges to addressing this problem. First, it is very hard to define teacher "effectiveness," especially for teachers in non-tested grades (K-2) and non-tested subjects (e.g., arts, foreign language). Second, no one has successfully developed a tool for conclusively predicting which teacher candidates will be the most effective teachers. Third, professional development opportunities for teachers are notoriously of varying quality, with some being very helpful but far too many being significantly less so. Fourth, teacher evaluations are rarely used effectively to help teachers improve their performance and to remove the small number of teachers who are significantly underperforming. Fifth, the policies that most drastically affect teachers, specifically tenure and compensation, primarily reward qualities other than effectiveness.

Research has made it clear this problem requires a comprehensive and systemic solution that includes simultaneously improving teacher recruitment, training, professional development, evaluation, tenure, and compensation. Simply firing more teachers will not fix the problem. While there might be a very small number of low-performing teachers who need to be removed, improving teacher quality must primarily be about better supporting and developing our existing teachers and recruiting new high-quality teachers into the profession.

Recruitment and Training

Prospective teachers have several paths for pursuing training and certification including traditional teacher college programs, alternative certification programs within a traditional university, and independent alternative certification programs. Although some independent alternative certification programs, such as Teach for America, have data suggesting they disproportionately

produce high-performing teachers, research has shown that on the whole there is no difference in the performance of teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs.³⁴

The traditional route for becoming a teacher is to enroll in a teacher education program at an undergraduate college. Admission to a traditional education program at a public university in Tennessee requires a 2.5 GPA and either passing each subtest of the Praxis I, scoring a 21 or greater on the ACT, or scoring a 920 or greater on the SAT. Undergraduate education programs must include a general liberal arts component, classes on core education theory (e.g., pedagogy), courses in a concentration area (e.g., elementary education or middle and high school math), and a semester of student teaching.³⁵

Several traditional teacher preparation programs in Tennessee have concluded these requirements are insufficient and have thus decided to redesign their training model. Specifically, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) has launched a Teacher Quality Initiative (TQI) focused on developing a new model for undergraduate teacher training that includes three years of coursework to develop a strong content knowledge and pedagogy base but also an intensive year-long residency in the fourth year of the program.³⁶ This model, which has been recognized as a national best practice by the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE), is currently being piloted at East Tennessee State University and Middle Tennessee

State University. To date, the pilots suggest it will be critical to identify how universities can collaborate with districts in a way that benefits both the district and the teacher candidates.

Several traditional teacher preparation programs also offer alternative certification programs. One of the most prominent is the University of Tennessee at Martin's Transition to Teaching program, which is funded by a federal grant. This program recruits mid-career professionals and recent college graduates who have content knowledge in math and science to go into teaching. Participants take pedagogy classes online, must make a three-year commitment to teach in a high-needs middle or high school, and receive a mentor for their first two years of teaching in the classroom.³⁷



**IMPROVING TEACHER
QUALITY MUST
PRIMARILY BE ABOUT
BETTER SUPPORTING
AND DEVELOPING OUR
EXISTING TEACHERS AND
RECRUITING NEW HIGH-
QUALITY TEACHERS INTO
THE PROFESSION.**



Tennessee also has several independent alternative certification programs. The most prominent statewide program is Teach Tennessee, which is operated by the Tennessee Department of Education. Teach Tennessee aggressively recruits mid-career professionals and retirees to enter the teaching profession, especially to teach math, science, and foreign languages. Candidates must have at least five years of work experience in fields similar to those in which they wish to teach. The program provides a four-week training session over the summer and a mentor for the first year a candidate is in the classroom. Since its inception in 2005, the program has trained 202 teachers.³⁸

Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, two nationally renowned independent alternative certification programs, operate in both Nashville and Memphis. There are also a range of highly successful local alternative certification programs, including the Distinguished Professionals program in Knox County. Several of these programs are discussed in the promising practices section of this report on page 45-48.

The breakdown of the number of new teachers trained in 2008-09 by the Tennessee Board of Regents, University of Tennessee, private colleges, and independent alternative certification programs is shown in Figure 3.10 below.

To further encourage the expansion of independent alternative certification programs, the State Board of Education recently adopted the Transitional Licensure Policy, which goes into effect in Fall 2009. This policy will replace the existing Alternative Type I, Alternative Type II, and Teach Tennessee licenses with a single transitional license that is good for one year but that can be renewed for two additional years. Most importantly, individual school districts and education non-profits, such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, can grant

transitional licenses independently without having a formal partnership with a traditional teacher preparation program.³⁹

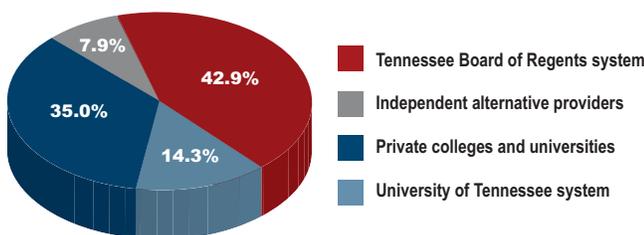
Despite these progressive efforts on teacher licensure, teacher recruitment efforts in Tennessee remain limited. While some independent alternative certification programs such as Teach Tennessee, Teach for America, and The New Teacher Project have significant recruitment budgets, most traditional teacher preparation programs report they spend little, if any, of their budget on recruitment. The only two statewide recruitment programs are the Minority Teaching Fellows program, which gives \$5,000 a year to 100 minority students training to become teachers, and BASE-TN, which provides limited financial aid for traditional classroom teachers seeking a graduate degree in special education and for teacher aides seeking initial certification in special education.⁴⁰ An effort to pass a \$5,000 scholarship for math and science teacher candidates that would be funded by corporate and philanthropic foundations for the first two years was tabled in the General Assembly's 2009 legislative session.⁴¹

The presence of these alternative licensure routes makes it critical to create an accountability system to ensure both that no low-quality programs are training teachers and that all teacher training programs are constantly improving. The state currently has two efforts in place to ensure some level of accountability, although neither effort is effectively driving continuous teacher preparation program improvement.

The first effort is the Tennessee Department of Education's Office of Teacher Education and Accreditation, which is responsible for accrediting all the state's teacher preparation programs. The office trains a Board of Examiners, which is composed of individuals from various education-related organizations in Tennessee, to conduct inspections of each teacher preparation program in the state. The Examiners are charged with ensuring programs are in compliance with State Board of Education standards and NCATE standards (the latter only when the institution is NCATE accredited, as 20 of Tennessee's 39 institutions are).⁴² Each teacher preparation program is evaluated every five years. While Examiners ensure institutions meet state and NCATE standards, the accreditation teams intentionally do not differentiate between strong and weak aspects of preparation programs unless the weak aspects are in violation of either state or NCATE standards.

The second effort is the Tennessee Teacher Preparation Program Effectiveness Report Card, which is produced annually by the State Board of Education. Using TVAAS data, the report card includes the percent of teachers from each teacher training program that are in the upper and lower quintiles of teacher

Figure 3.10
Sources of Newly Trained Teachers, 2008-09



Source: Tennessee Department of Education

effectiveness. Teacher effects are broken down by subject, grade-level, and whether teachers have 1-3 years of experience or 1-5 years of experience.⁴³ Based on conversations with higher education institutions, the Report Card does not appear to be driving changes in teacher preparation programs partly because of the limited data the Report Card contains (e.g., the number of teachers it looks at from each institution is very small) and because it is not clear precisely how a higher education institution should change its program based on the Report Card findings. To at least partially address this problem, Figure 3.11 provides a cumulative total of the percentage of teachers in each teacher training program that are in the top and bottom quintiles of teacher effectiveness. The table lists Tennessee institutions in descending order by percentage of teachers whose value-added scores placed them in the top quintile of

effectiveness. While this data is not particularly helpful for identifying which portions of individual institutions' programs are strong or weak, it does provide an overall picture of whether institutions are producing a disproportionate share of high or low performing teachers.

Professional Development and Evaluation

The traditional approach to teacher professional development is for teachers to leave the classroom for a day or two to receive training in a seminar or workshop format and for teachers to then return to their classroom with limited, if any, follow-up. Research has shown this type of professional development is generally ineffective, as the training rarely includes individualized instruction and is not reinforced throughout the

Figure 3.11

Summary of 2008 Report Card on Teacher Training Program *(Institutions with at least 20 teachers in data set)*

College	# Teacher Candidates (2002-07)	% Top Quintile Teachers	% Bottom Quintile Teachers	5-Year Retention Rate
Belmont University	34	35.30%	11.80%	65.40%
David Lipscomb University	81	27.20%	16.00%	52.30%
Freed-Hardeman College	73	23.30%	19.20%	76.40%
Cumberland University	56	23.20%	12.50%	85.30%
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	139	22.30%	28.10%	71.10%
Vanderbilt University	51	21.60%	25.50%	31.90%
Austin Peay State University	232	19.80%	24.60%	76.60%
Middle Tennessee State University	454	18.90%	25.80%	67.30%
Tennessee State University	202	18.80%	27.20%	78.90%
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	290	18.60%	17.60%	68.70%
Lee College	181	17.70%	29.80%	63.90%
University of Memphis	558	17.60%	24.60%	76.00%
East Tennessee State University	331	17.20%	21.50%	63.60%
Tennessee Wesleyan College	71	15.50%	11.30%	68.80%
University of Tennessee, Martin	239	15.50%	14.60%	75.20%
Tennessee Technological University	515	15.30%	21.40%	70.30%
Christian Brothers University	85	15.30%	25.90%	88.50%
Milligan College	60	15.00%	25.00%	75.00%
Tusculum College	194	14.90%	20.10%	72.20%
Crichton College	84	14.30%	28.60%	N/A
Maryville College	58	13.80%	19.00%	71.40%
Lincoln Memorial University	180	13.30%	23.30%	78.10%
Trevecca Nazarene University	167	12.60%	29.30%	85.90%
Carson-Newman College	119	11.80%	18.50%	68.60%
Union University	48	8.30%	22.90%	80.60%
Lambuth University	27	7.40%	18.50%	71.40%
State Totals and Averages	4,582	22.5%	17.2%	72.1%

Notes: The percent of bottom or top quintile teachers is relative to all teachers in the state, not just beginning teachers.
 Source: Tennessee State Board of Education Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs

school year. By contrast, research has found the professional development opportunities most likely to improve teacher effectiveness are “characterized by sustained, coherent study; collaborative learning; time for classroom experimentation; and follow-up.”⁴⁴

Professional development goes hand-in-hand with teacher evaluations, as evaluations provide a mechanism for teachers to reflect on the skills and content areas they need to further develop. Recent research has found that even when teacher evaluations occur, they are rarely used effectively, as almost all teachers receive the top rating on every aspect of their evaluation and principals rarely take time to talk with teachers about their evaluations. Moreover, very few evaluations explicitly include a discussion of student achievement gains.⁴⁵

Tennessee’s statewide teacher evaluation process is called the Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth. Created in 1997, the framework was revised in 2004 to increase its specificity and bring it into alignment with the “highly qualified” teacher provision of the No Child Left Behind Act. All classroom and specialist teachers, including media specialists, counselors, and psychologists, must be evaluated using the framework. While a teacher with an apprentice license must be evaluated every year, a teacher with a professional license must be evaluated at least once every five years. Apprentice teachers in their first two years must be observed by their principal three times, apprentice teachers in their third year must be observed two times, and professional teachers must be observed twice or undergo a focused assessment. Teachers must be notified before classroom observations are conducted. Evaluations are supposed to be used to create professional growth plans for teachers, which are intended to structure teachers’ professional development opportunities.

In 2006, the State Board of Education and the state Department of Education commissioned a review of the framework. The review found that over 30 percent of respondents had received less than a half day of training on the framework, teachers generally did not know the criteria that were examined on the framework, and the domain of the framework focused on professional development was confusing to both administrators and teachers.⁴⁶ On the whole, this suggests the evaluation framework is not being used particularly effectively. At least partly for these reasons, the Governor’s office recently launched a task force to examine how the framework might be improved.

The Tennessee Department of Education provides a variety of professional development opportunities for teachers, including a number of statewide and regional conferences. The most recent addition to the Department’s professional development

offering is the Electronic Learning Center (ELC), an online set of resources including podcasts, video clips, and web-based professional development seminars. The ELC, which was accessed by over 154,000 in the first six months of 2009, includes video recordings of the Department’s Spring Content Knowledge Institute and the Department’s “Every Student A Reader” instructional summit.⁴⁷ While the state is working hard to provide appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers, it is very difficult for teachers to align their professional development opportunities with their individual needs if they are not receiving effective evaluations.

Also, unlike a number of other states, Tennessee has not broadly encouraged or incentivized the implementation of induction and mentoring programs for new teachers or the development of small, collaborative learning communities in individual schools. However, some districts have adopted or developed such programs, including the Benwood Initiative in Hamilton County and the Teacher Advancement Program in Knox County, both of which are highlighted as promising practices on page 47 of this report.

Tenure and Compensation

Many of the most critical policies that directly affect teachers in Tennessee are based on qualities other than teacher effectiveness. Foremost among these policies are tenure and compensation.

Tennessee teachers are eligible for tenure after a three-year probationary period, the same period of time required for tenure in 31 other states. At the end of this probationary period, the director of schools can either recommend the teacher for tenure or deny renewal of the teacher’s contract. If tenure is granted, a teacher cannot be removed from that district in the future without due process, with dismissal requiring evidence of “incompetency, inefficiency, neglect of duty, unprofessional conduct, or insubordination.” In practice, it is extremely rare for a tenured teacher to be fired. Other states have reformed their tenure laws in recent years by extending the probation period before a teacher can obtain tenure, requiring teachers to renew their tenure status on a regular basis, and strengthening teacher evaluation processes.⁴⁸

In terms of compensation, Tennessee’s average teacher salary ranks 40th in the nation (see detailed discussion on pages 20-21). The state teachers’ salary scale, which serves as a minimum for all districts across the state, is based solely on a teacher’s years of experience and level of education, with more experienced teachers and teachers with higher levels of education receiving additional compensation.

Many researchers have advocated that teachers' compensation should be based at least in part on factors besides experience and education, such as student achievement gains and the functions a teacher performs in a school. In an attempt to address this challenge, the state General Assembly passed a teacher equity pay plan in fall 2006, which requires every district in Tennessee to develop a differentiated pay plan "to aid in staffing hard to staff subject areas and schools and in hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers."⁴⁹ Although creating a plan is mandatory, some districts have not allocated funds to implement their plans. As Figure 3.12 illustrates, nearly two-thirds of districts' differentiated pay plans include performance bonuses for teaching in hard-to-staff schools, 35 percent include tuition reimbursements for teachers with advanced degrees or certification in certain subjects, and 35 percent provide salary bonuses for National Board Certification. Only nine districts reward teachers for student achievement gains and only three districts provide bonuses for mentor teachers.⁵⁰

The only significant statewide financial reward for teachers is the Milken Family Foundation award, which is a \$25,000 award given annually to Tennessee's most effective teachers. Since the award began in Tennessee in 1992, over \$1 million has been awarded to outstanding teachers in the state.

In the past few months, the Governor's office has launched a major effort to improve teacher effectiveness. Specifically, Tennessee was one of six states to be awarded a grant by the National Governor's Association to develop a new teacher compensation model. As previously mentioned, the Governor's office is working to improve the state's teacher evaluation framework with the hopes of aligning it with this new compensation model. The state is considering pursuing funding for this new compensation model through a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant.

Figure 3.12
Tennessee Districts' Differential Pay Plan Components, 2008-09

Component	Number of Districts with Component
Bonus for high-need teachers or administrators	82
Tuition reimbursement for endorsements in high-need areas	48
Bonus for National Board Certification	47
Testing fees reimbursed for endorsements in high-need areas	22
Bonus for student achievement gains	9
Class size reductions	8
Bonus for obtaining additional degrees	5
Bonus for professional development	5
Additional personal days for fulfilling specific requirements	4
Bonus for obtaining tenure	4
Substitute provided for out-of-class experience	3
Bonus for mentoring other teachers	3
Bonus for perfect attendance	2
Student loan forgiveness	2
Bonus for recruiting other teachers	1
Tuition reimbursement for highly qualified teachers	1
Bonus for teachers who relocate to district	1
Tuition reimbursement for teachers obtaining Master's or taking higher level courses	1

Source: Office of Education Research and Accountability

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Throughout the better part of the 20th century, there was a significant push in American education to create large, comprehensive high schools that provided a single academic path for all students. Over time, however, there has been an increased focus on expanding the types of learning opportunities available to students. This section discusses four of those learning opportunities: charter schools, career and technical education, online courses, and Governor’s schools.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that receive funding directly proportional to the number of students they enroll.⁵¹ Charter schools tend to have more autonomy than public schools, are often exempt from many state and local regulations, and are schools of choice in which parents must actively choose to enroll their children.⁵² As Figure 3.13 shows, there are currently 16 charter schools operating in

Tennessee, with ten more scheduled to open in Fall 2009.


**THE CHALLENGE FOR
 TENNESSEE IS ENSURING
 IT CONTINUES DEVELOPING
 HIGH-QUALITY ONLINE
 COURSES AND EXPANDING
 THE AVAILABILITY OF SUCH
 COURSES STATEWIDE.**

Charter schools are one of the most politically controversial education topics in Tennessee. However, charter schools are not nearly as controversial in many other states including Arizona, which has 464 charter schools, Michigan, which has 229 charter schools, and Ohio, which has 315 charter schools. Tennessee’s debate about charter schools became so intense in the 2009 legislative session that U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called several leaders in the General Assembly advocating for an expansion of charter school eligibility. In the end, a bipartisan agreement was reached that expanded charter school eligibility to students on free or reduced price lunch in districts with more than 14,000 students and at least two high schools on the high-priority list. This includes six districts: Davidson County, Hamilton County, Knox County, Memphis City Schools, Sumner County, and

Figure 3.13
Tennessee Charter Schools

City	2008-2009 Existing Charter School	2009-10 New Charter School
Chattanooga	None	Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy Ivy Academy
Nashville	KIPP Academy Nashville LEAD Academy Smithson Craighead Academy Elementary School	Smithson Craighead Middle School Nashville Global Academy
Memphis	Circles of Success Learning City University School of Liberal Arts KIPP Diamond Memphis Academy of Health Sciences Memphis Academy of Health Sciences High School Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering Memphis Business Academy Memphis Business Academy High School Power Center Academy Promise Academy Soaring Toward Academic Readiness Southern Avenue Charter School The Soulsville Charter School	Freedom Preparatory Academy City University Boys Academy 4 existing Memphis City Schools

Source: Tennessee Charter School Association

Williamson County. The agreement also caps the number of charter schools in the state at 90, limiting the number in Nashville to 20 and in Memphis city to 35.

There is significant debate about the effectiveness of charter schools. Charter school proponents argue charter schools can be a source of innovation for traditional public schools and are often much more effective at increasing achievement for disadvantaged students. Opponents argue charter schools do little different from traditional public schools and take funding away from traditional public schools.

The only in-depth study about the performance of charter schools in Tennessee was conducted by the University of Memphis’s Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP). The study found Tennessee’s charter schools outperformed a comparison group of traditional public schools on 45 comparisons of student achievement but performed worse on 25 comparisons.

Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are high school programs of study that integrate traditional academic content with a career-focused specialization. Whether a student elects to pursue a postsecondary degree or immediately enter the workforce after high school graduation, CTE programs

are designed to provide students with relevant skills that will translate in the competitive job market.

In the 2007-08 school year, a total of 302,508 credits were taken in CTE courses, with the average student taking 1.25 credits. CTE courses are offered in nine different program areas including agriculture, business technology, career and technical cooperatives, contextual academics, family and consumer sciences, health sciences, marketing, technology engineering, and trade and industrial. As Figure 3.14 illustrates, in the 2007-08 school year approximately 24.4 percent of CTE course enrollment was in business technology courses while 23.2 percent was in trade and industrial courses and 14.7 percent was in family and consumer sciences courses.

Tennessee also offers CTE students several supplemental programs including Jobs for Tennessee Graduates (JTG) and Work Based Learning (WBL). JTG is designed to assist students at risk of dropping out of high school by teaching them interview etiquette and helping them develop skills that transfer to any career, including communication skills, time management, and clerical abilities. The program boasts a job placement rate of 80 percent and a full-time job placement rate of 60 percent.⁵³ WBL allows students to spend time during the normal school day interning at a work site related to their academic coursework.

Online Learning

Online courses can serve students in several ways: students at small schools can access a more diverse curriculum than their school might otherwise be able to offer; students interested in dual enrollment and other college courses can take online classes taught by college faculty without leaving their high school building; and students who fail certain classes can retake them online after school or over the summer without falling behind.

In April 2008, the State Board of Education passed a Virtual School policy establishing guidelines for both distance learning and e-learning. Distance learning refers to courses where a teacher in one part of the state teaches a course to students in a classroom in a different part of the state via video or

Figure 3.14
Career and Technical Education Enrollment by Program Area (2007-08)

Program Area	Total Course Enrollment	Percent of Total CTE Courses
Agricultural Education	33,822	9.0%
Business Technology Education	92,093	24.4%
Career and Technical Cooperative Methodology	3,510	0.9%
Contextual Academics	11,902	3.2%
Family and Consumer Sciences Education	55,652	14.7%
Health Science Education	24,562	6.5%
Marketing Education	16,663	4.4%
Technology Engineering Education	9,137	2.4%
Trade and Industrial Education	87,722	23.2%

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

online technology. The individual teaching the course must be a certified teacher, and a certified teacher or teaching assistant must be present in the actual classroom with the students. E-learning refers to courses that students take online but where there is not a live teacher on the other end. Students can take e-Learning courses from almost anywhere, including their home. However, if e-learning courses are taken at a school site, a certified teacher or teaching assistant must be present.⁵⁴

While districts across the state contract with several different distance and e-learning course providers, there are two statewide course providers, although both are still in the early stages of creating a truly meaningful statewide presence. The first provider is e⁴TN, which was created in 2005 with a three-year federal grant. The grant, which is run by the Hamilton County Department of Education, funded the development of distance learning and e-learning courses in eight districts: Bradley County, Bedford County, Dickson County, Hamilton County, Kingsport City, Lake County, Tipton County and Wilson County. Once courses are beta tested in these eight districts, they are made available to students across the state. Although the federal grant focused on developing high school courses, e⁴TN has also developed several courses for eighth graders, such as Computer Literacy, Algebra 1, and Geometry, and special courses for students with autism and other special educational needs. E⁴TN also contracts with vendors to offer additional e-learning opportunities, such as AP courses. The e⁴TN courses that have been developed to date are recognized as high-quality, having received national recognition from the United States Distance Learning Association in April 2009 as a best practice in online learning.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, demand for e⁴TN courses has risen rapidly, increasing by 900 percent between 2006 and 2009.⁵⁶

The second major statewide provider of distance learning and e-learning courses is a partnership between Tennessee High School in Bristol and the Niswonger Foundation. To date, Tennessee High has developed twenty state-approved online courses. The Niswonger Foundation is working to make these courses available statewide by funding the creation of e-learning sites in each of Tennessee's three grand divisions including Hamblen County and Blount County in East Tennessee, Bedford County in Middle Tennessee, and Hardeman and



Courtesy of Chris Walker

Senator Bill Frist visits a computer lab at Orchard Knob Elementary School in Chattanooga, TN with Hamilton County Superintendent Dr. Jim Scales and Orchard Knob Assistant Principal Barbara Shepherd on May 4, 2009.

Weakley County in West Tennessee. All e-learning sites will have access to the necessary technology hardware and teacher professional development to successfully offer the twenty approved courses.

Although both of these statewide online learning platforms have been developed, every student in the state still does not have access to these opportunities for a mix of logistical and financial reasons. The challenge for Tennessee is ensuring it continues developing high-quality online learning opportunities and expanding the availability of such opportunities statewide.

Governor's Schools

Tennessee Governor's Schools offer academic opportunities for gifted and talented high school students. At Governor's schools, students participate in a four- or five-week summer program with the option to earn college credit. Programs occur on university campuses and are offered in twelve disciplines: agricultural services, arts, computational physics, emerging technologies, engineering, humanities, informational technology, international studies, prospective teachers, sciences, scientific exploration of Tennessee's heritage, and scientific models and data analyses.⁵⁷

Transitioning to Higher Education

One of the clear goals of K-12 education is to prepare and transition an ever increasing number of students into higher education, whether that be a two-year community college or a four-year university. For this to occur, students need to take high school classes that prepare them for the rigors of college-level course work, be educated about the paths for getting into higher education institutions, and have realistic options for financing their higher education.

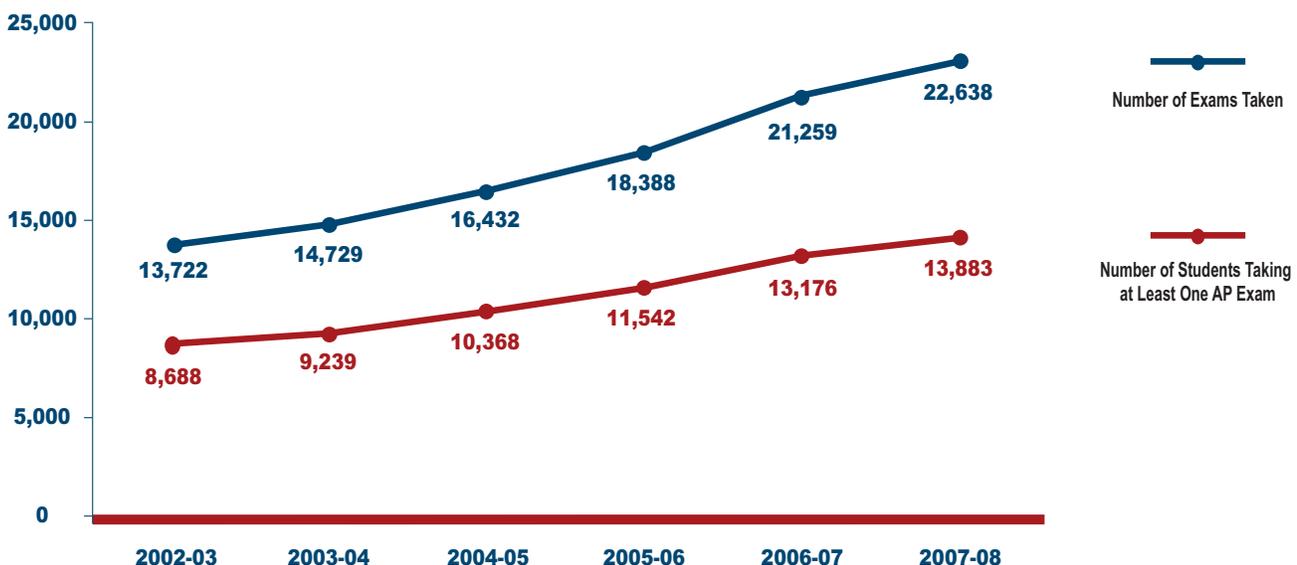
Far too many college-bound Tennesseans graduate high school without the skills needed to excel in higher education. For example, approximately forty percent of all Tennessee high school graduates entering a Tennessee Board of Regents institution had to take remedial courses, with nearly three quarters of students enrolling in local community colleges requiring remedial classes.⁵⁸ Estimates suggest the state could save \$46 million annually if entering freshmen did not have to take these remedial courses.⁵⁹

One strategy for ensuring high school students are prepared for college is having them enroll in college-level classes. One of the most well-known programs for doing so is the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program. After each AP course, students take an AP exam and, if they perform well, receive college credit. In 2006, 67 percent of Tennessee's public high schools offered at least one AP course, up from 54 percent in

1996.⁶⁰ Since 2002, the number of Tennessee students taking AP exams has increased 59.8 percent while the number of AP exams taken has increased 65.0 percent (see Figure 3.15). In 2006, 63 percent of Tennessee students taking an AP exam scored a three or higher, a score typically considered passing and transferable for college credit.⁶¹ This translated into 16 percent of all Tennessee's graduating seniors taking an AP exam in 2006, up from ten percent in 2002, and ten percent scoring at least a three or higher, up from six percent in 2002.⁶² While these are significant improvements, Tennessee still ranks behind all other Southeastern states except for Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi on both these metrics.⁶³

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB) is similar to the AP program in that it is an exam-based college-credit option widely recognized by universities and colleges across the globe. However, unlike the AP program which allows students to take any number or combination of AP classes, the IB program is a comprehensive two-year curriculum that requires classes in six areas: English, foreign language, experimental sciences, mathematics and computer science, individuals and societies, and the arts. Additionally, IB students are required to take a class on the theory of knowledge and conclude their coursework by writing an extended essay on a topic of their choosing. Currently nine high schools from seven districts in Tennessee offer the IB Diploma Programme.⁶⁴

Figure 3.15
Advanced Placement Exam Participation in Tennessee, 2002-2007



Source: Tennessee State Board of Education

Another path to taking college-level classes as a high school student is dual enrollment. Dual enrollment allows students to concurrently enroll in high school and college courses. The courses can be taught at either the high school facility or college campus and be led by either an adequately certified high school teacher or regular college faculty member. In Fall 2008, approximately 7,300 high school students were enrolled in dual enrollment courses at Tennessee Board of Regents institutions, and 985 students were enrolled at University of Tennessee institutions, (847 of which were at UT-Martin).⁶⁵ This represents a 38 percent increase over the past three years in dual enrollment at community colleges and an over 200 percent increase in dual enrollment at University of Tennessee institutions. On average, dual enrollment students annually take between 3.5 and 4.5 credit hours.⁶⁶ Students' ability to take dual enrollment classes has been greatly enhanced by the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship Dual Enrollment Grant, which provides eleventh and twelfth grade students \$100 per credit hour to take up to six credit hours of dual enrollment courses per academic year.

High school students can also earn college credit through dual credit programs in which a local higher education institution agrees to give high school students college credit for taking a specific course at a specific high school if the student does well on an end-of-course exam. These arrangements are logistically complicated as students only receive college credit for a course if they attend the higher education institution that negotiated the dual credit agreement. Currently, only four dual credit programs exist in the state.⁶⁷

Yet another option for making college-level classes accessible to high school students is early college high schools. Early college high schools, commonly referred to as middle colleges, are collaborations between a school district and a community college. These partnerships specifically target high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds that are at risk of dropping out of school. Students take a combination of high school and college courses, allowing them to fulfill their core academic requirements through a wider array of courses. Courses count both toward a student's high school diploma and for college credit, at times resulting in the student earning an associate's degree or substantial credit towards a bachelor's degree during their time in high school. There are currently five early college high schools in Tennessee, enrolling a total 734 students.⁶⁸

To further expand these types of options, Governor Bredesen recently launched the RAMP-UP task force. RAMP-UP is currently examining several options for improving the transition from high school to higher education including undertaking high-school redesigns, expanding early college high schools, expanding dual enrollment programs, and increasing the number of online college courses available to high school students. RAMP-UP is expected to release its final report later this summer.

In addition to taking college-level courses, high school students also need to be encouraged and understand how to apply to higher education institutions. Although there are a

number of local college access programs, the only program with statewide reach is GEAR UP, which is funded through a \$3.5 million federal grant. GEAR UP serves students in nine rural, high-poverty counties: Campbell, Cocke, Grundy, Hardeman, Johnson, Lake, Meigs, Union and Wayne.⁶⁹ GEAR UP provides a number of services to high school students including summer enrichment academies, college tours, admissions counseling, and financial aid workshops. Additionally, GEAR UP provides college tours and financial aid workshops to parents and curriculum alignment workshops for teachers and other school district personnel.⁷⁰

Even if students are accepted into a higher education institution, they still face the challenge of paying for it. While an entire report could be written on college financing, it's enough to note here that the largest college scholarship program in Tennessee is the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS). Created in 2004, TELS includes five separate scholarship programs, the largest of which is the HOPE Scholarship, which is awarded to Tennessee high school students that achieve at least a 3.0 GPA or score at least a 21 on the ACT. Of the freshmen entering Tennessee's public colleges and universities in Fall 2007, 65 percent received some form of TELS financial assistance. Research is inconclusive on the extent to which this assistance actually increases college matriculation and retention rates, although there is some evidence it has a statistically significant effect for certain student populations.⁷¹ However, it is clear many students fail to maintain their scholarship. For first-time freshmen in Fall 2004, only 32 percent of TELS recipients retained their award into their fourth year.⁷²



**FAR TOO MANY COLLEGE-
BOUND TENNESSEANS
GRADUATE HIGH
SCHOOL WITHOUT THE
SKILLS NEEDED TO EXCEL
IN HIGHER EDUCATION.**



Early Childhood Education and Additional Education Supports

Early Childhood Education

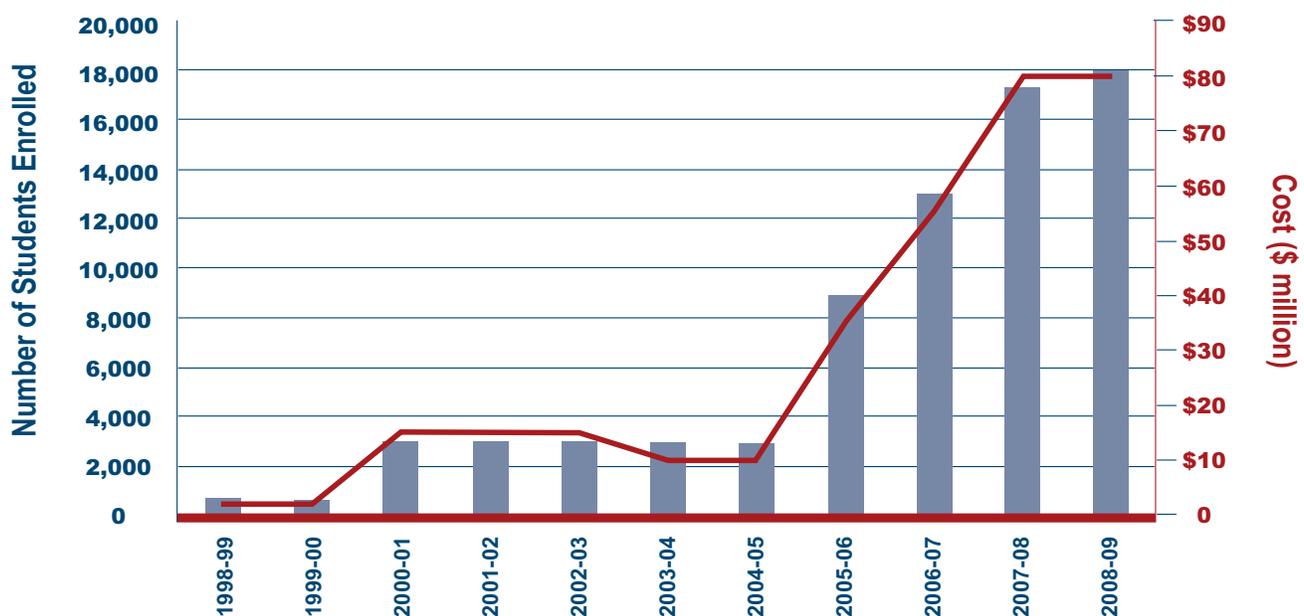
Formal schooling begins for most children at the age of five when they enroll in kindergarten. However, children experience significant physical and cognitive growth throughout the first years of their lives. Results from longitudinal studies suggest that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs can ensure children, especially disadvantaged children, enter kindergarten significantly more prepared to be successful in school than if they had not attended pre-kindergarten programs.⁷³

Governor Bredesen's Voluntary Pre-K Initiative was established to provide Pre-K opportunities for four year-old children across Tennessee. The state piloted a Pre-K initiative in 1998, but it was not until Governor Bredesen dedicated significant resources to the program in 2005 that it began to quickly expand, as Figure 3.16 illustrates. Today, 934 state-funded Pre-K classes serve approximately 18,000 four year-olds in 94 of Tennessee's 95 counties and in 133 of its 135 eligible school districts.⁷⁴ The state's Pre-K program has been praised for its quality, having met nine of the National Institute for Early Education Research's ten quality benchmarks for the past three years (only two states have achieved all ten) and ranking fifth in the nation on Pre-K Now's new ranking of "best chance" states for parents seeking a high-quality, state-funded Pre-K program.⁷⁵

An independent research group conducted a study of Tennessee's Pre-K program and found that children who had attended state-funded Pre-K classes performed better on reading, language arts, and math assessments relative to their peers who had not been enrolled in Pre-K. However, the study also found these gains failed to be sustained at higher grade levels, with scores between Pre-K and similar non-Pre-K students converging. However, many did not see this study as definitive, claiming it failed to account for a number of potential intervening variables. As a result, the state has contracted with Vanderbilt University to conduct a comprehensive five-year study of the state's Pre-K program. The study will be completed in 2014.⁷⁶

Tennessee has several other programs targeted toward improving early educational opportunities. The Governor's Books from Birth Foundation (GBBF) is a non-profit that helped launch and continues to support Imagination Libraries across the state. Since 2004, when Governor Bredesen established the foundation, GBBF and the Imagination Libraries have provided 7.7 million books to over 308,627 young children in Tennessee. The foundation has also helped raise funds so that a set of Imagination Library books could be purchased for all Voluntary Pre-K classrooms as well as Head Start Centers.⁷⁷ Additionally, the state Department of Education created Smart from the Start, a user-friendly website, to provide parents

Figure 3.16
Voluntary Pre-K Enrollment and Funding, 1998-2009



Source: Tennessee Department of Education

information about how they can promote learning and have positive interactions with their children from birth to age five.⁷⁸ Families who have young children with disabilities or developmental delays can choose to participate in the Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS). TEIS professionals meet one-on-one with parents to help them understand appropriate learning strategies for their child given his or her special needs.⁷⁹

The state also has initiatives that focus on early intervention for students who have difficulty reading. Tennessee received a federal grant for Reading First, the main literacy component of NCLB, and 74 schools across 22 districts now use the program to help students struggling with reading in kindergarten through third grade.⁸⁰ Also targeting reading concerns is Even Start (ES), which focuses on early childhood learning, parent education, and adult literacy. ES projects, which are coordinated locally, are required to operate throughout the year so that academic gains can be sustained over the summer. ES personnel visit participating families in their homes for at least one hour every month to deepen family's commitment to and participation in the program, which primarily involves parents reading to their children.⁸¹

Additional Education Supports

While early childhood programs aim to foster learning prior to a child's enrollment in the formal school system, there is also a need to support student learning throughout the elementary and secondary years outside of the regular school day. Programs that support the creation of a positive and healthy community environment and programs that provide after school and summer learning opportunities can be particularly beneficial. Tennessee has implemented several such programs.

Authorized by state legislation in 1993, many local school districts have established Family Resource Centers (FRCs), which serve as a support network for at-risk students in communities affected by family abuse, neighborhood violence, and overall poverty. Acting as an external support to schools, 104 FRCs have been established in 82 school districts across the state.⁸² FRCs, which often partner with local non-profits, have the flexibility to develop programs that meet the need of at-risk students in each community. For example, one FRC in Nashville is working

with at-risk students to plant a garden that grows food for local residents. Additionally, in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Health, the Department of Education operates the Coordinated School Health (CSH) program. The key aspect of the program is ensuring all students receive the appropriate health screenings. Since CSH was first piloted in 2001, 104,532 students have been referred to a healthcare provider as a result of school health screenings. Today, 135 school systems have implemented CSH, with 87 percent of them having implemented it district-wide.⁸³

Evidence links after school programs to student achievement gains as well as to decreases in juvenile crime rates.⁸⁴ Tennessee has received federal grants to establish 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC), which provide enriching and diverse educational opportunities during non-school hours. Program funds are given to local communities and directed towards students who attend high-poverty and/or low-performing schools. Grants are awarded to projects in the amounts of \$50,000 to \$110,000 per site over a minimum three-year period.⁸⁵

Additional after school educational opportunities are made possible through the Lottery for Education Afterschool Program (LEAP). Funded by lottery profits, LEAP allocates funding to public and non-profit organizations' after school initiatives.⁸⁶ LEAP closely resembles CLCC with a few important differences. Whereas a school must have at least 40 percent of its students on free and reduced lunch to be eligible for CCLC programs, the LEAP programs require that at least 50 percent of students enrolled in the LEAP program itself (not the school) be at-risk. CCLCs also have more flexibility in the services they offer. While CLCCs must have an academic component, they can provide any of 15 other services. LEAP programs, on the other hand, are required to offer 15 hours of specific services per week including homework assistance, tutoring or mentoring, a physical fitness or health component, reading/language arts, and math or science. Also, CCLCs are funded through federal grants while LEAP programs are funded exclusively through unclaimed state lottery winnings. One Family Resource Center in Loudon County is also a LEAP grantee. Although Coordinated School Health programs generally do not apply for LEAP grants, many LEAP grantees partner with CSH programs.⁸⁷



**THERE IS A NEED TO
SUPPORT STUDENT
LEARNING THROUGHOUT
THE ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY YEARS
OUTSIDE OF THE
REGULAR SCHOOL DAY.**



Infrastructure and Implementation

Tennessee has a fractured and disjointed system of education governance that makes it difficult to consistently implement new reforms and policies effectively. The state Constitution gives broad responsibility for education to the Tennessee General Assembly. While state statute includes some fairly specific education laws, such as those surrounding the state's accountability system, other laws are more vague, leaving room for interpretation by both the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education.

Created in 1875, the State Board of Education has responsibility for creating a wide range of state education policies including curriculum standards, graduation requirements, teacher certification requirements, and discipline policies. The Board has nine members, who are appointed for rotating four-year terms by the Governor, and a small full-time staff, which is led by an executive director. State law prohibits the Commissioner of Education from having any control over the Board, although the Commissioner is required by law to attend all State Board meetings.

The Commissioner of Education is appointed by the Governor and is responsible for running the Department of Education. The Department of Education is responsible for implementing

the education laws passed by the General Assembly and the policies approved by the State Board of Education. The Department has lost approximately 100 positions since the mid-1990s, including around 60 positions because of the state's current hiring freeze and employee buy-outs, making effective implementation somewhat challenging. The Department technically only reports to the General Assembly, not the State Board of Education, and the Commissioner has the authority to waive certain State Board regulations for individual school districts upon request.

In addition to the State Board and State Department, the Education Improvement Act of 1992 created the Tennessee Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA). Housed within the State Comptroller's Office, OREA is responsible for producing periodic reports on various education programs for the Governor and General Assembly. Although OREA does not fall under the authority of either the State Board or State Department, OREA must rely on data provided by the Department when producing its reports. To the frustration of all parties involved, this divided governance structure often results in unclear responsibilities, confusion over the proper mechanisms for accountability, and tension over resources.



Courtesy of Amanda Anderson, Tennessee Department of Education

Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Tim Webb reads to Ms. Campbell's First Grade Class at Sylvan Park Elementary School in Davidson County.

Governance issues are further complicated by the fact many education decisions are made at the local, rather than state, level. Tennessee has 136 school districts, including 95 county school districts, 27 municipal school districts, and 14 special school districts. These districts vary greatly. While eight districts only operate a single school, Memphis City Schools operates 190 schools, more than the number of schools operated by the 56 smallest school districts combined. Each of these districts is governed by a local school board, which is solely responsible for appointing the district superintendent. County and municipal school districts do not have their own taxing authority but instead must rely on taxes collected and allocated by the County Commission (for county school districts) or both the County Commission and local city council (for municipal school districts). Special school districts possess their own taxing authority, although the General Assembly sets a separate cap on each district's maximum tax rate.

Despite this complicated governance system, there are at least two additional statewide structures that could be helpful for implementing statewide education reforms. The first is the Department of Education's nine

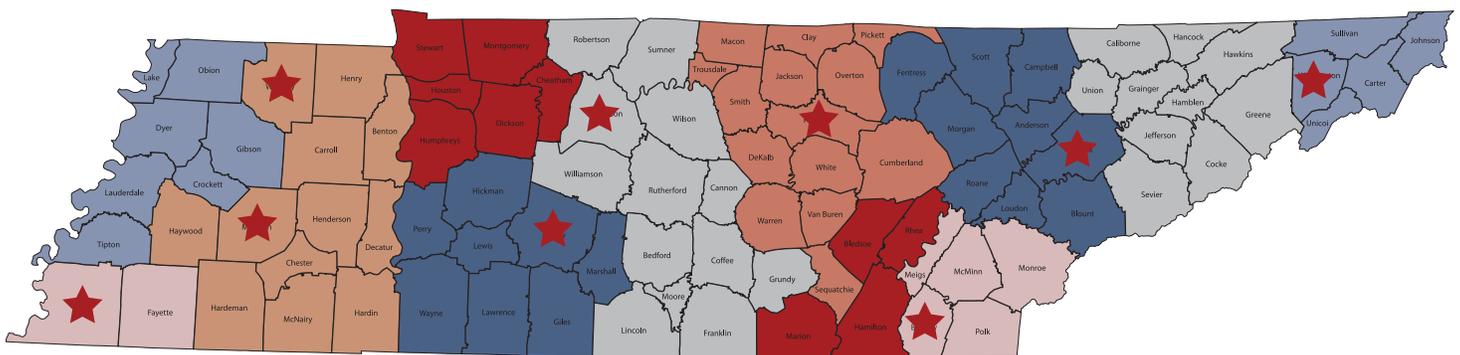
Field Service Centers. As Figure 3.17 illustrates, these centers are located across the state. Each of these centers employs ten to twelve staff members including specialists in career and technical education, federal programs, special education, technology, school improvement planning, and assessment and testing. These centers were originally intended to serve as the primary state resource for local school districts. However, this goal has only partially been realized, at least in part because of the Department's recent hiring freeze and limits on staff travel.

Additionally, in 2005, the state created a series of regional and local P-16 councils, as Figure 3.17 illustrates. Operating under the Tennessee Board of Regents, the councils are composed of higher education, K-12 education, business, and community leaders in each region or locality. The goal of the councils is to bring multiple stakeholders together in each area to improve standards, teaching quality, and the transition from high school to post-secondary education. Although a strong structure, the vast majority of P-16 councils are still working

to identify ways to be most effective. If given sufficient resources and direction, the Field Service Centers and P-16 councils could provide a strong infrastructure on which statewide education reform efforts could be built.


TENNESSEE HAS A
FRACTURED AND DISJOINTED
SYSTEM OF EDUCATION
GOVERNANCE THAT MAKES IT
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IMPLEMENT NEW REFORMS
AND POLICIES EFFECTIVELY.


Figure 3.17
Map of Regional P-16 Councils and Field Service Centers



Note: Each color represents a different regional P-16 council and each star represents a Tennessee Department of Education Field Service Center.
Source: Tennessee Department of Education



Variations in Districts Across Tennessee

It should come as no surprise that some school districts in Tennessee are producing higher levels of student achievement than others. An important part of any attempt to reform education in Tennessee is identifying districts that are excelling, understanding why they have been successful, and finding ways to replicate their success. However, this must all be done while keeping in mind the wide variations in student demographics that exist across districts.

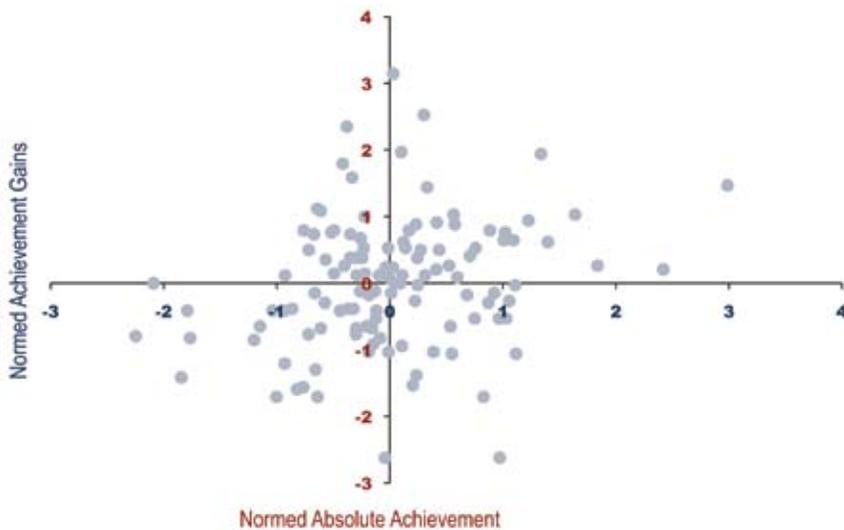
The top performing districts in the state can easily be identified using TCAP and ACT scores. As Figure 4.1 shows, several districts stand out as exceptionally high-performing systems, including Franklin City, Greeneville City, Johnson City, Maryville City, Oak Ridge City, and Williamson County. However, there are noticeable differences in the student demographics of these districts and the student demographics of the entire state. For example, while these top six districts on average have 11.5 percent minority students and 21.8 percent

economically disadvantaged students, the state on average has 29.4 percent minority students and 54.5 percent economically disadvantaged students. These relationships between absolute achievement and student demographic characteristics persist across the entire state, as Figure 4.2 illustrates.

For these reasons, it is extremely useful to look at the progress a district makes over time in addition to simply the district's absolute achievement level. Tennessee has two primary measures of achievement progress. The first is TVAAS value-added scores, which were discussed in detail on pages 18-19. The second is "cohort progress," a statistic which is calculated by the Tennessee Department of Education. Cohort progress is defined as the progress a district's 2008 eighth grade cohort experienced over the previous five years. This growth is calculated by taking how a district's eighth grade students performed relative to students in the rest of the state in 2008 (as a percentile) and subtracting from it how the district's third grade students performed relative to students in the rest of the state in 2003 (as a percentile).⁸⁸ The

distributions of both TVAAS value-added scores and cohort progress are shown in Figure 4.3 on page 40.

Figure 4.1
Relationship Between Absolute Achievement and Achievement Gains by District, 2007-08



*Notes: Graph only includes districts with more than two schools. Normed absolute achievement gains is the average of (1) normed average 3-8 TCAP reading scores and (2) normed average 3-8 TCAP math scores. Normed achievement gains is the average of (1) normed average 3-8 grade TVAAS reading scores (2) normed average 3-8 grade TVAAS math scores (3) normed progress of a district's 2008 eighth grade cohort since third grade in reading and (4) normed progress of a district's 2008 eighth grade cohort since third grade in math. Progress is measured by how a district's eighth grade students performed on the TCAP relative to students in the rest of the state in 2008 (as a percentile) and subtracting from it how a district's third grade students performed on the TCAP relative to students in the rest of the state in 2003 (as a percentile).
Source: Tennessee Department of Education*

However, some would argue looking at value-added scores and cohort progress alone is not enough, as what it takes to increase the achievement of high-performing students might be different than what it takes to increase the achievement of low-performing students. These individuals would further argue that what one really needs to do is examine a combination of absolute achievement and achievement progress. One way to do this is to divide districts into quintiles based on their absolute level of achievement and then compare the achievement progress of districts within each quintile. Not only does this control for absolute achievement, but it also partially controls for socioeconomic characteristics, as socioeconomic characteristics are highly correlated with absolute achievement levels. When districts are divided into these quintiles, the districts that made the most progress in each quintile for 2007-08 are Alcoa City (top quintile), Clinton City (second quintile), Trenton Special School District (third quintile), Jefferson County (fourth quintile), and Claiborne County (bottom quintile).

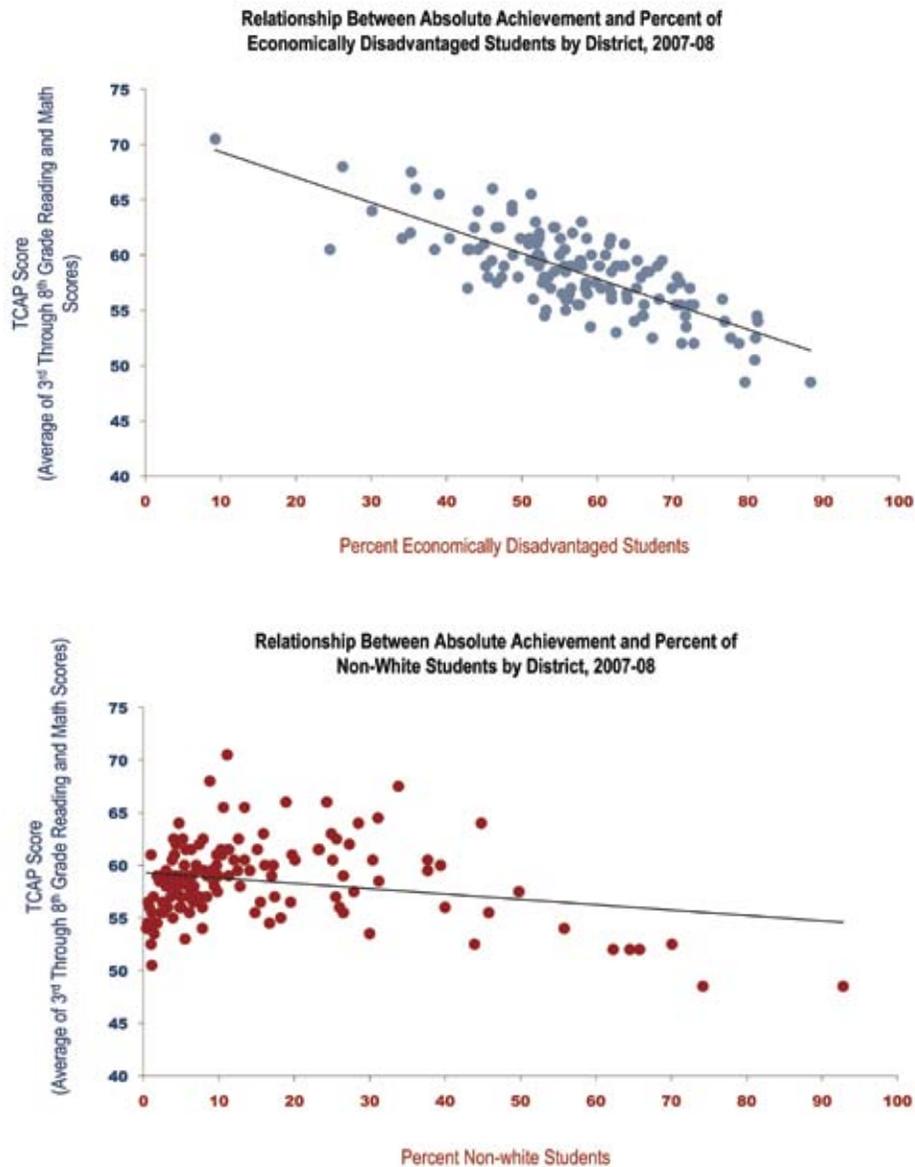
Analysis of High-Performing Districts

To investigate why students in these five districts are making significant progress, SCORE conducted case studies of each district. For each case study, SCORE interviewed the district superintendent and several other education and community leaders, such as the school board chairman or chamber of

commerce president. In order to see the difference between high- and low-performing districts, SCORE also talked with leaders of one district that made the least progress in student achievement in each quintile.^{iv}

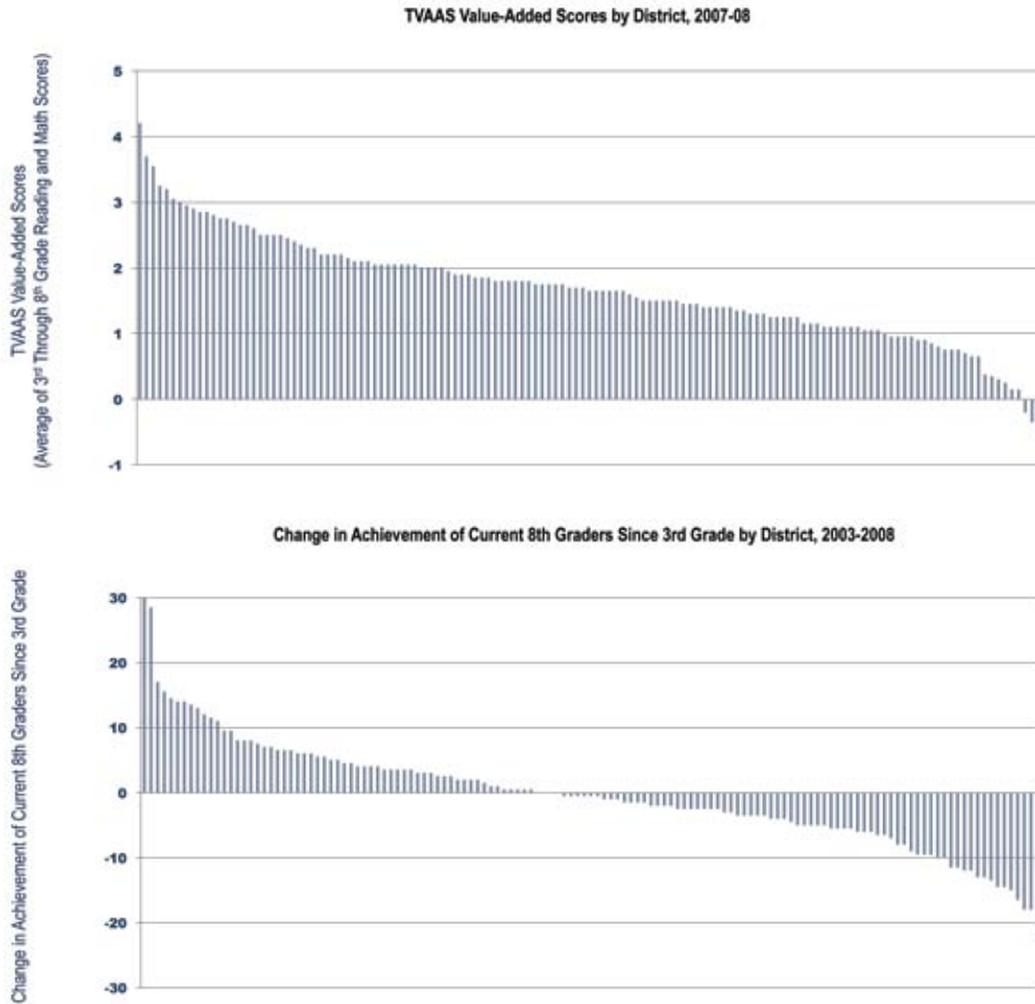
^{iv} The names of these low-performing districts will be kept anonymous.

Figure 4.2
Relationship Between Absolute Achievement and Student Demographics, 2007-08



Source: Tennessee Department of Education

Figure 4.3
Achievement Gains by District, 2007-08



Notes: The data for the lower graph is calculated by measuring how a district's eighth grade students performed on the TCAP relative to students in the rest of the state in 2008 (as a percentile) and subtracting from it how a district's third grade students performed on the TCAP relative to students in the rest of the state in 2003 (as a percentile). Separate change scores were calculated for both reading and math and then averaged together to create a single change score.
 Source: Tennessee Department of Education

The five high-performing districts examined are extremely diverse. Not only is there one district from each achievement quintile, but the districts also differ significantly in the size of their student populations, their student demographics, and their funding levels. For example, while the smallest district is Clinton with 848 students, the largest district is Jefferson County with 7,366 students. Moreover, while Clinton is a PK-6 district, all the other four districts are PK-12 districts. The

student populations in each district also differ substantially. While Trenton has 32.2 percent non-white students, Claiborne County has only 1.8 percent non-white students. Similarly, while Clinton has 52.6 percent economically disadvantaged students, Claiborne County has 71.7 percent economically disadvantaged students. The funding level in these high-performing districts also varies widely. For example, while Alcoa spends \$9,862 per pupil, Trenton only spends \$7,018.

Despite this great diversity, there were five characteristics that existed in all the high-performing districts but that were absent in the lowest-performing districts. First, the high-performing districts all have targeted professional development opportunities for teachers that are embedded within schools and maintained over time. Jefferson’s County’s professional development strategy, called Mission Possible, is among the strongest in the state. The key element of this strategy is the Teaching Induction Program, which pairs each new teacher with an experienced, mentor teacher. Jefferson County’s strategy also includes county-wide, grade-specific, and subject-specific professional development programs. Like Jefferson County, both Clinton and Trenton provide mentors for first year teachers. In Claiborne County, the district has fully embraced the idea of ongoing, embedded professional development by stopping the practice of bringing in experts for one-day trainings and instead hiring a full-time professional development supervisor who is able to provide ongoing professional development to district teachers. High-performing districts also are focused on preparing teachers to meet the new standards of the Tennessee Diploma Project (TDP). For example, Alcoa sent 42 of its 105 teachers to the state TDP training sessions and is holding a series of its own TDP training sessions within the district. By comparison, professional development opportunities in low-performing districts are rarely ongoing, embedded within individual schools, or focused on the state’s new standards.

Second, high-performing districts invest in training and developing strong school leaders. For example, Claiborne County holds an annual week-long academy for school administrators focused on teaching principals how to recruit and recognize promising teachers, accurately and fairly evaluate teachers’ performance, and remove low-performing teachers. Trenton is in the process of developing a similar program. By comparison, low-performing districts rarely mention the importance of developing a strong cadre of principals.

Third, high-performing districts utilize data to improve teaching and learning. For example, both Alcoa and Claiborne

County provide teachers with regular, informal training sessions on how to retrieve and interpret TVAAS data and how to effectively use TVAAS data to improve classroom instruction. Similarly, Clinton requires its teachers each year to analyze TVAAS data in grade-level teams. High-performing districts are also working to use data to monitor students’ progress throughout the year. For example, Alcoa alerts teachers each fall to students who were not proficient in the previous academic year, and Trenton is planning to implement a formative assessment system for all students next fall. By comparison, low-performing districts rarely ever mention TVAAS data or formative assessments.

Fourth, high-performing districts provide supplemental services to support their most disadvantaged students. For example, Alcoa offers after school programs such as tutoring and credit recovery opportunities; Clinton provides all students with free breakfast in the morning and after school and transportation home for just \$5 a day; Trenton proactively uses after school programs, Family Resource Centers, and Coordinated School Health screenings to meet students’ social needs; and Claiborne County places a nurse in every school, offers after school credit recovery, and after school tutoring. However, SCORE found that low-performing districts also offer fairly similar supplemental services, suggesting that such services alone do not automatically lead to increases in student achievement.

Finally, high-performing districts adopt additional policies that meet the specific challenges of their district. For example, to address a high dropout rate, Claiborne County developed freshman academies and high school math intervention programs to ensure students don’t fall behind in the early years of high school. Similarly, to address coordination issues between its various schools, Trenton schools is currently implementing a grade-level transition program known as “Trenton Way” to ensure that students gain the skills they needed in each grade to succeed in the following grade. In this way, although high-performing districts share a number of qualities in common, they also develop programs to address the specific challenges they are facing.



**AN IMPORTANT PART OF
 ANY ATTEMPT TO REFORM
 EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE
 IS IDENTIFYING DISTRICTS
 THAT ARE EXCELLING,
 UNDERSTANDING WHY
 THEY HAVE BEEN
 SUCCESSFUL, AND FINDING
 WAYS TO REPLICATE
 THEIR SUCCESS.**



Funding and Resources

There is wide variation in the resources available to each school district in the state. While the state attempts to ensure each district has at least a minimal level of funding through the BEP formula, both the federal and local governments play a significant role in determining the precise level of funding a district has available. For example, the more students a district has eligible for federal programs such as Title I and IDEA, the more federal money it will receive. Also, local governments vary widely in the resources they devote to K-12 education, with wealthier districts generally providing more resources.

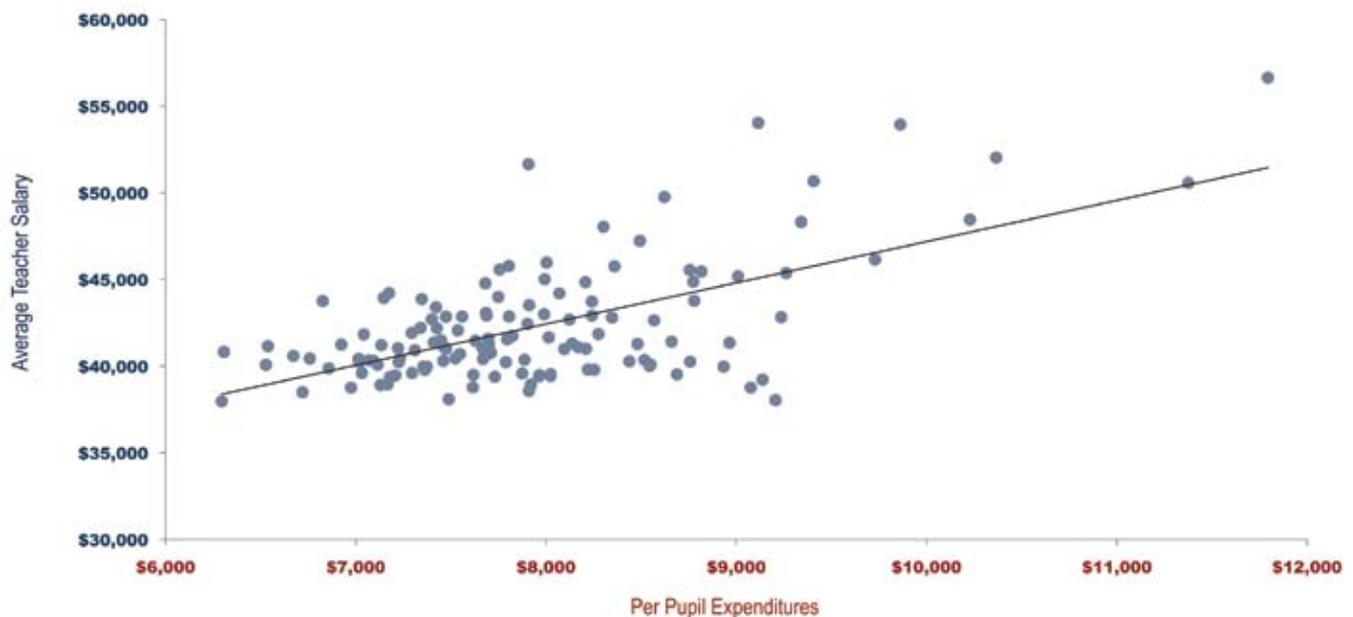
While the average per pupil expenditure in the state is \$8,345, per pupil spending ranges from \$6,296 in Gibson County to \$11,794 in Oak Ridge. There is also wide variation in average teacher salary across the state. While the average teacher salary in the state is \$44,820, average teacher salaries range from \$37,971 in Gibson County to \$56,641 in Oak Ridge. There is generally a high

correlation between per pupil spending and average teacher salary, as the scatterplot in Figure 4.4 illustrates, with higher per pupil spending in a district being aligned with a higher average teacher salary.


**THERE IS VERY LITTLE
CORRELATION BETWEEN
PER PUPIL SPENDING
AND ANY MEASURE OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.**

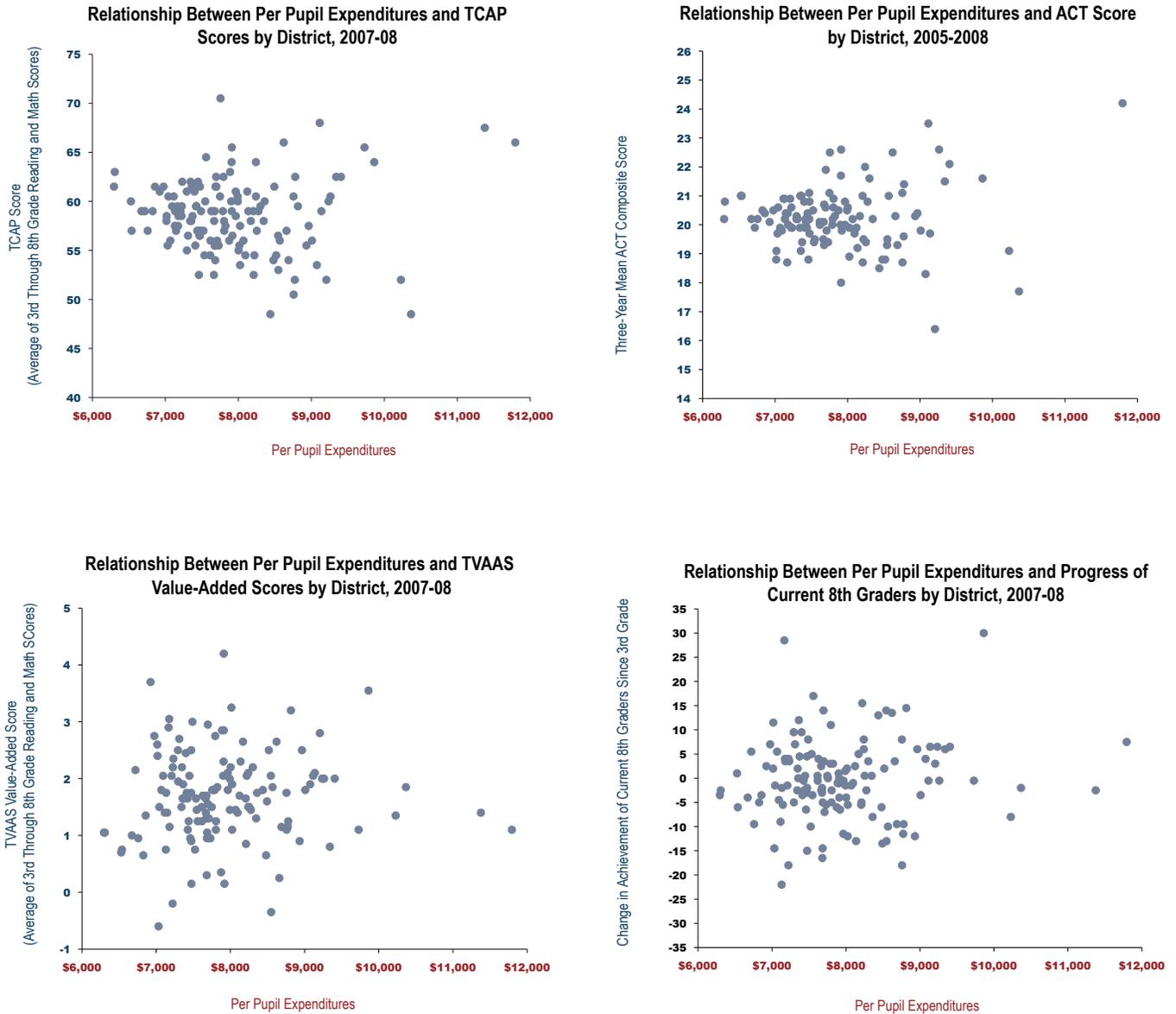

Despite this strong relationship between per pupil spending and average teacher salary, there is very little correlation between per pupil spending and any measure of student achievement or education attainment, as the scatterplots in Figure 4.5 illustrate. This is consistent with research on the effects of per pupil spending on student achievement which finds there is not an automatic link between increased per pupil spending and increased student achievement. While it is important that schools and districts have access to the appropriate and necessary resources, simply giving districts more money will not automatically lead to improvements in educational outcomes.

Figure 4.4
Relationship Between Per Pupil Expenditures and Average Teachers Salary by District, 2007-08



Source: Tennessee Department of Education; Tennessee Education Association

Figure 4.5
Relationship Between Per Pupil Spending and Various Educational Outcome Metrics



Notes: For Figure on the lower right, see description of data in Figure 4.3.
 Source: Tennessee Department of Education

Promising Practices

While state education policy is critical to improving Tennessee's schools, much of the hard work must be done in local school districts across the state. To this end, this section highlights 34 promising practices that are working to improve student achievement in districts across the state. While no two districts face exactly the same challenges and many of the programs highlighted in this section are new enough that there is not yet conclusive data on their effectiveness, these programs nevertheless provide an array of "promising practices" from which others might learn.

Standards

Diploma Project Public Service Announcements

Public School Forum of East Tennessee

The Public School Forum of East Tennessee has developed three public service announcements emphasizing the importance of Tennessee "raising the bar" and implementing new, higher graduation standards. Two of the three ads feature University of Tennessee Women's Basketball Coach Pat Head Summitt. The ads were aired on several stations in the Knoxville media market and can now be viewed online at www.publicschoolforum.org.

Diploma Project Informational Website

Williamson County Schools

In order to prepare students and parents for the new high school graduation requirements of the Tennessee Diploma Project (TDP), Williamson County Schools added a section to its district website that provides detailed information about TDP. In addition to clearly listing the state's new graduation requirements by subject and course title, the site contains informational videos that walk students and parents through the new graduation requirements. These videos include information on different paths students can take to meet the new requirements, instructions on how to register and plan a student's high school curriculum, and even a skit illustrating a course planning meeting between a student and guidance counselor.

Accountability

Fresh Starts

Memphis City Schools and Metro Nashville Public Schools

In an effort to turn around schools that had failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for several years, Memphis City Schools gave five schools Fresh Starts in 2004. Fresh Starts include appointing a new principal at each school and

requiring every teacher in each school to reapply for their job. In Memphis, Fresh Starts also included monetary rewards for teachers and principals if they met key benchmarks on student achievement, school discipline, student and teacher attendance, teacher participation in professional development, and parental involvement.⁸⁹ In the first year after their Fresh Start, these five schools on average increased their verbal scores eleven percentage points and their math scores six percentage points.⁹⁰ To date, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) has Fresh Started two schools, both of which have recently started to meet AYP. For the 2009-10 school year, MNPS will be giving five additional schools Fresh Starts.⁹¹

Data Systems and Technology

ViewPoint Data Warehouse and Classroom Technology

Greeneville City Schools

Greeneville City Schools has created Viewpoint, a data warehouse that allows teachers to instantly access detailed data on each of their students including students' grades, standardized test scores, class schedule, and parents' contact information. Teachers are able to use this system to monitor students' progress and determine when a problem has arisen. This system was created with a one-time initial investment of \$35,000 and is maintained with a yearly investment of \$5,000. Additionally, the district has ensured every school has wireless Internet access, every classroom has a wireless LCD projector, and every teacher has a Gateway tablet laptop. To ensure these tools are fully utilized, the district hosts a semi-annual technology professional development day for all employees, called Tech Blitz, at which staff members take up to three training sessions on how to most effectively use technology. Training modules include courses on student achievement data analysis, web design, and workshops on how to integrate technology into students' daily lessons.

Education Information Management System

Knox County Public Schools

Knox County Public Schools and the Knoxville Area Chamber Partnership are partnering together to design and implement an Education Management Information System (EMIS), a data warehouse capable of holding fifteen years of academic, demographic, and financial data. Among its many features, EMIS will use an early warning system to identify potential drop-outs for targeted intervention, tailor student progress reports to individual student and parent needs, build a menu of standardized formative assessments district-wide, and allow administrators to monitor costs at the individual school level.

Each day, data will be extracted from the district's disparate systems and copied to a central data store, where it will remain unchanged and available for analysis. The central data store will be accessible to authorized users—including teachers, principals, administrators, and school board members—twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week over the internet. The goal of the project is to enable all school system employees to quickly obtain easy-to-understand information and then to work with those employees to learn how to translate that information into action that improves both student achievement and district and school efficiency.

Using TVAAS Data to Improve Instruction

Education Consumers Foundation

Each year, the Education Consumers Foundation presents awards to the six elementary and six middle schools in the state that have the highest value-added scores as measured by TVAAS. In 2007, a researcher supported by the Education Consumers Foundation visited the six schools that had won the award for two consecutive years to find out what the schools were doing to be effective. The report found that at these six

schools: students progress was constantly measured using formative assessments; principals directly received updates on student progress; teachers adjusted their practice when students did not perform well on formative assessments; data was used as a key metric of teacher performance; principals and high-performing teachers consistently worked with struggling colleagues to improve their instruction; and schools regularly informed parents about their children's progress.

Teacher Recruitment, Preparation, and Support

Teacher Preparation Residency Models

Belmont University, ETSU, MTSU, and UT-Knoxville

Four traditional teacher preparation programs in Tennessee include year-long residencies as part of their training. Both Belmont University and the University of Tennessee Knoxville use a 4 + 1 model, in which students complete their bachelor's degrees in four years and then spend a fifth year earning a master's degree while completing a year-long residency in a school. As part of the residency, each teacher candidate works



SCORE Chairman and former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist discusses the Teacher Advancement Program with educators at Holston Middle School.

Courtesy of Chris Walker

in a classroom with an experienced mentor teacher and, over the course of the year, is given increasing teaching responsibilities in that classroom.⁹² Working with the Southern Regional Education Board and the Tennessee Board of Regents' Teacher Quality Initiative, both East Tennessee State University and Middle Tennessee State University are working to implement a residency model in the fourth year of their undergraduate programs.⁹³ Although only in the pilot phases, the ETSU and MTSU models are very promising models if they can be effectively implemented.

Teach for America

Memphis City Schools and Metro Nashville Public Schools

Teach for America (TFA) recruits some of the nation's most promising college graduates to teach in an underperforming school for two years. A nationally renowned model, TFA has a highly selective application process focused on recruiting high-

performing individuals from diverse backgrounds. Individuals who are selected to join TFA go through an intensive summer training institute. During their two years serving in a classroom, Corps Members are given ongoing one-on-one and group professional development, which allow them to pursue their teaching certificate. Since 2007, TFA has placed 50 Corps members a year in Memphis. Starting in Fall 2009, TFA will also begin placing 50 Corps Members a year in Nashville. Data shows TFA Corps Members in Memphis outperform the average new Memphis City Schools teacher and, in many cases, outperform experienced teachers.⁹⁴ Additionally, nearly 25 Memphis TFA alumni are still working in education in the city in some role, most often as teachers or school leaders.

The New Teacher Project

Memphis City Schools and Metro Nashville Public Schools

The New Teachers Project (TNTP), a nationally renowned non-



Courtesy of Chris Walker

SCORE Chairman and former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist with Ida B. Wells Principal Tamika Carwell, New Leaders for New Schools Memphis Executive Director Janice Crawford, and EPIC Memphis Program Director Cheryl Green during a visit to Ida B. Wells School. Ida B. Wells has received an EPIC award two consecutive years.

profit, works closely with school districts to design programs to address their staffing needs. In 2004, TNTP began working with Memphis City Schools to implement an earlier hiring timeline and capture top teaching applicants. In 2006, TNTP launched the Memphis Teaching Fellows, which aggressively recruits, selects and trains accomplished career changers and recent graduates to teach in shortage subject areas. After an intensive summer pre-service training, Fellows teach full-time while they complete certification coursework. In the past two years, the Fellows program has attracted over 1,600 applicants and produced 62 teachers with an average GPA of 3.25. In 2007, TNTP launched a Model Staffing Initiative (MSI) in Memphis to provide intensive staffing support to the district's 20 lowest-performing schools. In 2008, TNTP channeled 278 high quality teacher applicants to MSI schools, an average of 14 candidates per vacancy. Based on its success in Memphis, TNTP is launching both a Teaching Fellows Program and Model Staffing Initiative in Nashville in 2009. The first cohort of 75-100 Nashville Teaching Fellows will begin teaching in Fall 2009.

Distinguished Professionals Education Initiative

Knox County Public Schools

The Distinguished Professionals Education Initiative (DPEI) seeks to address the need for highly qualified math, science, and foreign language teachers by recruiting professionals from these fields to teach these courses as “adjunct” high school teachers. Founded in 2005 by the Public School Forum of East Tennessee, Pro2Service Professional Project Services and Knox County Schools, DPEI recruits, trains, mentors, and licenses experts from these specialty fields and places them in part-time, adjunct teaching positions. DPEI teachers continue to work in their profession while teaching part-time. All DPEI teachers must have a master's or bachelor's in the field they want to teach, at least ten years of work experience in the field, and complete 50 hours of pre-service online training. DPEI teachers currently serve as instructors for 31 courses in Knox County Schools and local principals have identified at least 60 additional courses that could benefit from future DPEI teachers.

Talent Transfer Initiative

Knox County Public Schools

Knox County Public Schools' Talent Transfer Initiative (TTI) incentivizes top-performing teachers to teach in some of the district's lowest-performing schools. Funded by a federal grant, Knox County's TTI program recruits some of the district's most effective teachers, as measured by TVAAS teacher effect scores, and provides them a \$20,000 bonus over two years

if they are willing to move and teach in one of the district's lowest-performing schools.⁹⁵

Benwood Initiative

Hamilton County Public Schools

Launched in 2001, the Benwood Initiative focuses on improving student achievement through teacher professional development and principal leadership development. Initially funded by a \$5 million grant from the Benwood Foundation and a \$2.5 million grant from the Public Education Foundation, the initiative initially targeted the eight lowest-performing elementary schools in Hamilton County. When the program was launched in 2002, the superintendent required that every teacher at one of these eight schools reapply for their job. A comprehensive incentive package including financial bonuses, reduced mortgage loans, and a tuition-free master's degree were offered to recruit, motivate, and retain highly qualified teachers in these schools. Teachers in these schools were also provided intensive one-on-one and group professional development. Teachers whose students significantly increased their TVAAS scores were given additional compensation. Student achievement dramatically increased, with the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced on the TCAP increasing by 25 percentage points in reading and 34 percentage points in math between 2003 and 2008. Moved by these results, the Benwood Foundation and Public Education Foundation are currently expanding the program to eight additional schools.

Teacher Advancement Program

Knox County Public Schools

In collaboration with the Great Schools Partnership, Knox County Public Schools piloted the nationally renowned Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in three of its schools in 2006. TAP aims to improve student achievement by focusing on teacher professional development. The TAP program has four components: multiple career paths; ongoing, applied professional growth; instructionally focused accountability; and performance-based compensation. TAP schools create positions of mentor and master teachers, who observe and evaluate their colleagues and hold them accountable for results. Mentor and master teachers receive annual stipends of \$2,500 and \$6,000 respectively. To encourage professional growth, TAP requires teachers from the same grade level or subject to hold weekly collaborative planning meetings. Teachers can earn bonuses of up to \$3,500 a year based on their performance, which is determined by a combination of their supervisor's evaluation, their individual classroom student achievement gains, and their school-wide student achievement gains.⁹⁶

Integrated Teacher Professional Development

Clarksville-Montgomery County School Schools

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System has one of the state's strongest teacher professional development programs. New teachers receive training and support from the district's Professional Development Center, which provides classroom resources, technical support, and a professional library that teachers can access during the evenings and on weekends. Each elementary and middle school is given a full-time academic coach, and each high school is given a consulting teacher, who is a content specialist that can assist with instruction. The Professional Development Center also runs the Professional Learning Activities Network (PLAN), a new online resource for teachers that includes downloadable classroom resources and online professional development seminars.

The Effective Practice Incentive Community

Memphis City Schools

Funded by a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant and operated by New Leaders for New Schools, the Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) was launched in Memphis City Schools in 2006 to improve teaching and school leadership. Principals are eligible for bonuses of up to \$7,500 a year and teachers are eligible for bonuses of up to \$2,500 if their students have exceptionally high achievement gains.⁹⁷ However, in order to receive these bonuses, principals and teachers must be willing to help disseminate the practices that led to their school's achievement growth via EPIC's online Knowledge System. Either as a written or video case study, each school must highlight what it is doing to increase student achievement. In the 2007-08 school year alone, 650 educators in Memphis received rewards totaling more than \$900,000. That same year, EPIC was named as Memphis City School's "bright spot" by the Commercial Appeal. EPIC is also being piloted in Washington D.C. and Denver Public Schools.⁹⁸

Middle School Math Teacher Incentive Pay Pilot

Metro Nashville Public Schools

Led by a research team at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, Metro Nashville Public Schools is participating in a pilot of performance-based compensation incentives for middle school math teachers. The project includes 392 middle school math teachers who are eligible to receive incentive bonuses ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 depending upon the achievement gains their students achieve. In Fall 2009, Vanderbilt is expected to release a study on whether these incentives result in increased student achievement.

Leadership

Hamilton County Leadership Initiative

Public Education Foundation of Hamilton County

With assistance from the Annenberg Foundation, the Public Education Foundation (PEF) runs a leadership initiative with several components. The primary component is a year-long, twenty-day Leadership Fellows program that includes monthly workshops, job shadowing, school visits, and small study groups. Program participants are selected by a PEF-appointed committee and are not guaranteed jobs in Hamilton County Schools. Since it was launched in 1998, the Fellows program has trained almost 300 individuals, including 41 principals and 45 assistant principals. The Leadership Initiative also includes a number of professional development opportunities for school leaders, including a two-day Summer Institute, a one-day Winter Institute, a series of Summer Literacy Leader Institutes, and a book club for educators who want to discuss the latest literature on effective leadership.

Principals Leadership Academy of Nashville

Metro Nashville Public Schools and Vanderbilt University

In 2000, Vanderbilt University, the Nashville Public Education Foundation, and Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) partnered to create the Principals' Leadership Academy of Nashville (PLAN). Participants are aspiring principals selected by the MNPS Director of Schools. The program includes an intensive two-week summer training session, one all-day Saturday meeting each month during the school year, and a monthly one-on-one meeting between each aspiring principal and his or her mentor, who is either a high-performing MNPS principal and/or a PLAN alumni.⁹⁹

Urban Education Center

Memphis City Schools

Under the leadership of new superintendent Dr. Kriner Cash, Memphis City Schools has launched an Urban Education Center focused on developing high-quality school leaders. The Center's primary program will be its Executive Leadership Program (ELP), which will focus on developing "a cadre of school leaders committed to eliminating the achievement gap." The year-long residency based program, which is scheduled to launch in August 2009, will work in partnership with the University of Memphis and Christian Brother's University. Participants will receive a certificate in urban education or additional college credit. In addition to the ELP program, the Urban Education Center also runs summer training

professional development programs on a range of topics for all Memphis City Schools principals.

New Leaders for New Schools

Memphis City Schools

New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) is a national non-profit focused on developing new school leaders. With an acceptance rate of less than seven percent, NLNS has a highly selective process for recruiting and selecting high-performing current and former educators who are interested in becoming school leaders. New Leaders attend a five-week summer training institute and then participate in a year-long, full-time, paid residency in an urban public school working alongside a mentor principal. After completing their residency year, New Leaders are placed as principals and assistant principals in Memphis City Schools, where they receive one-on-one continued support from a New Leaders Performance Coach. Since coming to Memphis in 2004, NLNS has trained over 40 principals or assistant principals. In 2007-08, 18 percent of NLNS-led schools made gains of 20 or more points combined across English and math, compared to only six percent of district schools. In the three Memphis high schools with graduation data and led by New Leaders, students are increasing their graduation rates at a faster pace than other schools in the district.

Aspiring Leaders Program

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System

With initial support from the Stupski Foundation, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) developed an Aspiring Leaders Program to help train teachers and assistant principals to become principals. This program includes giving intensive professional development to these Aspiring Leaders both in group and one-on-one settings and focuses on developing principals in five areas: teamwork, focus on student achievement, stakeholder engagement, learning environment, and distributed leadership. Additionally, the district provides significant ongoing professional development options to experienced principals through the district's Professional Development Center.¹⁰⁰

The Broad Institute for School Boards

Memphis City Schools

Memphis City Schools' school board has been selected as one of five school boards to currently participate in the Reform Governance in Action (RGA) program sponsored by the Center for the Reform of School Systems and the Broad Foundation's Institute for School Boards. The two-year RGA program trains

school board and superintendent teams to establish a wide range of effective policies and processes that improve board operations, strengthen management oversight, and directly improve student learning. The RGA program includes four off-site training institutes and ten on-site consulting visits, each of which centers around both case studies and large and small group discussions.

Transition to College

Ayers Foundation College Access Program

Decatur, Henderson, and Perry County Schools

The Ayers Foundation runs a two-pronged program aimed at increasing college access for students in Decatur, Henderson, and Perry counties. The first component of the program is a \$4,000 last-dollar annual scholarship for all high school graduates in the counties to pursue two-year or four-year degrees. Since being launched in 2000, 1,558 students have received scholarships totaling \$4.8 million. The second component is college counselors who are placed in each of the counties' high schools to help students navigate the college application and financial aid process. The Foundation has found the counselors are just as important as the funding to increasing students' college matriculation and completion rates.

Knox Achieves

Knox County Public Schools

Starting in Fall 2009, Knox Achieves will provide scholarships of up to \$2,000 a year to approximately 500 Knox County high school students who enroll in one of the region's three community colleges: Pellissippi State, Roane State, and Walters State. Priority for the scholarships is given to first generation college students. Scholarships are for two-years of funding as long as the student maintains a 2.0 GPA. Starting last January, Knox Achieve mentors began working with every public high school in Knox County to ensure interested graduating seniors took all the necessary steps to enroll and be admitted to one of these three institutions.¹⁰¹

Educate and Grow

Kingsport City Schools

In 2001, Kingsport City launched the Educate and Grow program to provide last-dollar scholarships to graduating seniors from Kingsport City high schools to enroll at Northeast State Community College. The program has now been expanded to include high school graduates in Carter, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties. Kingsport is also working



to build an Academic Village in downtown Kingsport, where an estimated 2,500 students will attend classes each day. The village will house the Regional Center for Health Professions, which will host all of Northeast State Community College's medical programs; the Kingsport Center of Higher Education, where students can earn a four-year degree from a variety of colleges and university; and the Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing and the Pal Barger School of Automotive Technology, where students can earn technical credentials. Together, Educate and Grow and the Academic Village were named one of Harvard University's Top 50 Innovations in Government for 2009.

“Plant the Seed” Program

Fentress County Public Schools

Starting in Pre-K, Fentress County Public Schools' “Plant the Seed” program is focused on emphasizing the importance of attending post-secondary education. As part of the program, middle and high school students visit local colleges, vocational schools, and technical schools to experience a collegiate atmosphere first-hand. Students in the county's two high schools are also encouraged to take dual enrollment classes, and a new program is being created to invite recent alumni enrolled in post-secondary education institutions back to their middle and high schools to discuss their experiences and answer students' questions about college.

Project GRAD Knoxville

Knox County Public Schools

Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) is a whole school public-private education reform model serving over 134,000 economically disadvantaged youth in 213 inner city schools across the nation. The model was adopted in Knox County in 2004 as a joint venture between Knox County Schools and the private sector. GRAD focuses on increasing high school graduation rates and ensuring students have a successful transition to college by providing academic support, social services, classroom management strategies, college access, scholarships, and summer institutes on college campuses. In Knoxville, GRAD serves two high-need feeder patterns of schools encompassing a total of ten elementary, two middle, and two high schools. To date, 602 Project GRAD scholarships have been awarded to qualifying graduates of the two high schools.

Early Childhood Education and Additional Education Supports

Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance

Tennessee State University

The Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance provides staff development for early childhood education teachers across the state. In collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Tennessee State University manages the alliance, which includes nine other higher education institutions. The Alliance offers a training program that allows individuals to receive an early childhood education program administrative credential and will soon be launching online training for early childhood education providers across the state.

“100% Graduation Is Clarksville's Business” Campaign

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System

The Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, Leaf-Chronicle, Clarksville Area Chamber of Commerce, and several other local business groups have come together to launch an initiative to ensure every child graduates high school. Called the “100% Graduation is Clarksville's Business” campaign, the initiative includes a comprehensive public awareness campaign encouraging citizens to tutor a young person, lend education materials when able, and generally encourage high school students to graduate high school.¹⁰² Businesses are encouraged to incorporate education information in newsletters, allow flexible work time for high school age students, and celebrate student accomplishments.¹⁰³ Participating businesses receive a “100% Graduation” decal that they can display in support of the effort.

Blount Education Initiative

Blount County

Concerned about the state of education in Blount County, the Blount Education Initiative (BEI) is a consortium of educators, business leaders, and community activists focused on making education Blount County's top priority. BEI has just completed research on the attitudes of students and citizens in Blount County toward education and is in the process of launching a county-wide public awareness campaign.

Milan Endowment for Growth in Academics

Milan City

The Milan Endowment for Growth in Academics (MEGA) is Tennessee's oldest private community endowment for public

education. Since its inception in 1990, MEGA has funded over 150 different projects, totaling over \$400,000 in total investment. Started with just a single check for \$10,000 from the district's largest employer, the foundation has continued to raise small dollar donations from engaged businesses and parents to support educational projects of teachers in the district who would otherwise not be able to find funding. Although many districts in the state have education foundations, MEGA is one of the most successful, especially given the relatively small size of the Milan community.

Parents as Teachers

Wilson County

Wilson County Schools, Lebanon Special School District, the University of Tennessee Extension Services, and Prospect, Inc. have come together to form the Wilson County Parents as Teachers (WCPAT) program. Based on the national Parents as Teachers model, WCPAT focuses on ensuring school readiness for every child by hosting group support meetings and providing parents with personal home visits by trained specialists. These meetings and visits serve as opportunities for parents to receive information about child development and the educational needs of their young children. Additionally, the program connects parents with social services agencies, medical agencies, childcare organizations, and social activities in the community. As a benefit of enrolling in the program, children also receive access to free learning development and health screenings.

Truancy Prevention Program

Hamilton County Public Schools

Alarmed by their ranking as the state's urban district with the highest truancy rate, Hamilton County Public Schools partnered with the county sheriff's office and local police department to improve student attendance. Since state law defines a student as being truant when they miss more the five days of school, the district implemented a policy where after a student's fourth absence, school administrators are required to call the student's parents and ask them to come to the school for an informal meeting to discuss the child's attendance. If a student reaches a sixth absence, parents are called into a meeting with administrators and representatives from the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, who warn parents and students about the legal actions that can be taken if truancy continues. In a collaborative but separate program called YMCA Community Action Program (Y-CAP), up to 20 students with frequent absences receive support services including after-school tutoring and one-on-one counseling. Students typically stay enrolled in

Y-CAP for three months. Longitudinal studies have shown Y-CAP graduates have a 90 percent high school graduation rate, 17 percentage points higher than the district average. Since the implementation of both programs, truancy rates in the district have declined 8 percentage points.

Safe Schools / Healthy Students Initiative

Bradley County and Cleveland City Schools

Bradley County and Cleveland City School District are implementing a Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative. Initially funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the initiative includes several programs aimed at creating safe schools and promoting healthy childhood development. For example, over half the faculty in the two districts have been trained and are now implementing Second Step, a violence prevention program geared to preschool through eighth grade students. The districts have also established a Juvenile Drug Court liaison who is responsible for providing intensive, year-long support to first-time non-violent drug offenders. Every elementary school was also given a School Resource Officer (SRO), and every high school was given two SROs. As a result of these programs, arrests, petitions, and citations of juveniles in both districts have been cut in half. Both Bradley County and Cleveland City schools are working to determine which aspects of these programs can be maintained now that the federal grant has expired.

On April 1st, SCORE's meeting focused on school data and accountability. The Steering Committee heard from Sandy Kress, former education advisor to former President George W. Bush, and Bill Sanders, the creator of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). Both discussed the importance of using data to improve school performance and classroom instruction.

SCORE's April 30th and May 22nd meetings both focused on improving teacher quality. The April 30th meeting focused on improving the quality of teacher preparation programs and featured Jeanne Burns, the Associate Commissioner for Teacher Education Initiatives at the Louisiana Board of Regents and Michael Whitmore, the director of the teacher urban residency program at the Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL) in Chicago. The May 22nd meeting featured John Deasy, Deputy Director of Education at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Tim Daly, the president of The New Teacher Project. Deasy talked about the need to create a comprehensive set of policies to improve teacher effectiveness, and both Daly and Deasy emphasized that student achievement was one of multiple components for determining teacher effectiveness.

SCORE's July 1st statewide meeting focused on school leadership and featured Richard Laine, Director of Education

Programs at the Wallace Foundation, and Jon Schnur, CEO of New Leaders for New Schools. Both Laine and Schnur discussed the importance of developing strong school leaders and providing them ongoing, meaningful support, especially in their first years leading a school.

In addition to these statewide meetings, SCORE has conducted 40 town hall meetings with educators, business leaders, government officials, and community leaders from across the state. The map in Figure 5.1 displays the locations of those town hall meetings.

SCORE is also online with an interactive website (www.tennesseescore.org) where educators, parents, and interested citizens can comment on the SCORE blog, sign up to receive the biweekly newsletter, and submit stories of "promising practices" in their hometown. SCORE also has its own Facebook and Twitter pages - links are available on the SCORE website.

Over the next two months, SCORE will continue holding statewide and town hall meetings. In late October, SCORE will release a final report with recommendations on how Tennessee can improve its K-12 education system. In mid-November, a follow-on effort to SCORE will be launched to both pilot the recommendations SCORE puts forth and to advocate that those recommendations be implemented into statewide policy.


**IN LATE OCTOBER,
 SCORE WILL RELEASE
 A FINAL REPORT WITH
 RECOMMENDATIONS
 ON HOW TENNESSEE
 CAN IMPROVE ITS
 EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

Figure 5.2
SCORE Timeline

