



# The State of Education in Tennessee 2012-2013

1207 18th Avenue South Suite 326  
Nashville, TN 37212  
615.727.1545  
[www.tnscore.org](http://www.tnscore.org)  
    
@score4schools

S C  R E  
State Collaborative on Reforming Education



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# Letter from Senator Bill Frist and Jamie Woodson

February 5, 2013

Dear Fellow Tennesseans,

Over the last several years, Tennessee has become a national leader in education reform by enacting bold policies to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Beginning in 2011, wide scale implementation of those policy commitments began. This made the last year Tennessee's opportunity to prove whether it would be able to ensure that the policies we have passed – from raising academic standards to evaluating principals and teachers in new ways – would lead to positive impacts for our students. The hard work of a broad range of stakeholders has helped Tennessee's students make the most academic progress in the state's history. While Tennessee has shown that it was up to this reform challenge, much work remains to accelerate these improvements and ensure that all our students are graduating with the skills they need to compete in the global economy.

Since the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) was founded, we have been committed to ensuring that every student in Tennessee graduates high school prepared for college and the work-

force. As the state's work has shifted from changing policy conditions to ensuring those policies are implemented with fidelity, it is crucial that we understand the successes and challenges that we have faced in helping districts and schools make our policy goals a reality. The 2012-13 State of Education in Tennessee report that follows will provide you with an overview of the academic gains the state has made, update you on the work that has contributed to the improvements students have experienced, provide extensive state and district data, and highlight education priorities for Tennessee in 2013. While we have made significant strides in improving achievement outcomes for students, far too many of our students remain ill-prepared for life after high school. There is much more to be done, and we must sustain the important work taking place now.

As you will see, the priorities for 2013 focus on the actions we believe must be taken to ensure that Tennessee continues its work to become the fastest improving state in the country. These priorities are based on the notion that in order to effectively implement reforms, educators need the right supports and resources. All of us—parents, educators, policymakers, business leaders, and community members—have a unique role to play in supporting educators and sustaining the reforms that have been put in place.

Whether we succeed or fail in this work over the next few years will have significant implications in the lives of the next generation of Tennesseans. We have already proven that we can rise to significant challenges as a state and overcome them to improve outcomes for students. As the link between producing an educated workforce and creating jobs remains of critical importance, it is imperative that we learn from our successes and challenges to continue on our pathway of improvement.

With warmest regards,

*Bill Frist*  
*Jamie Woodson*





# Executive Summary





In 2011, educators began the tough and challenging work of implementing many of the policy changes that have transformed Tennessee into a national leader in education reform in classrooms, schools, and districts throughout the state. In 2012, the state showed it was up to this challenge, and the hard work is already paying off for students in improved achievement and growth.

Over the last year, all stakeholders—including K-12 educators, higher education faculty, the Governor, Tennessee Department of Education, State Board of Education, and General Assembly—have committed to not only implementing the new reforms, but also to monitoring progress and making changes that are in the best interest of students. The state has remained committed to implementing teacher and principal evaluations, while making changes that reduce the administrative burden of the work and strengthen the link between evaluation results and professional learning opportunities. The state has engaged K-12 educators and higher education faculty to ensure that as higher standards are introduced in classrooms, they are truly changing instructional practice. And, the state has revised its approach to identifying high and low performing schools to ensure those that are most in need receive the necessary supports to improve.

As a result, in 2012, Tennessee students made the most academic progress in the state's history. Statewide, reading proficiency levels have increased, and now, 50 percent of students are reading at or above grade level. Additionally, 55,000 more students in Tennessee are proficient or advanced in math and 38,000 more students are proficient in science compared to two years ago. At the high school level, more than half of students taking exams in English I, English II, Algebra I, biology, and history scored proficient or advanced for

the first time since Tennessee began raising its academic standards in 2009.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, Tennessee was one of only two states to make double-digit gains in improving high school graduation rates over the last decade.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, more of the state's high school graduates have enrolled in higher education over the last two years than ever before.<sup>3</sup>

Although Tennessee has experienced significant progress in improving student achievement, there is more work to do to ensure that all students are prepared to compete in the global economy after they graduate from high school. While students are faring better on state exams and are graduating from high school, only 16 percent of students are "college-ready" across all four ACT benchmarks (English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science).<sup>4</sup> To be successful in today's global economy, students need to be competitive with their peers nationally and internationally. Not only are U.S. students not keeping pace with those in other countries, but students in Tennessee are making less progress on international assessments than students across America.<sup>5</sup> The work Tennessee is engaged in is as important as ever to ensure that our students are provided every opportunity for a successful future.

The 2012-13 State of Education in Tennessee report provides a comprehensive update of the state's progress in improving student achievement. It also analyzes the work that has occurred over the last year in the state's major reform areas—effective teaching and

leadership; academic standards and assessments; using student data to improve instruction; implementing innovative practices; and accountability structure and oversight—that have contributed to student achievement gains. Throughout the first section, there are highlights of lessons learned from the field as well as recommendations to the state to ensure that we continue on the pathway of preparing all of our students for success in college or the workforce.

The second section of the report outlines five strategic priorities that will help Tennessee become the fastest improving state in the nation with regard to public education. Sustaining policy leadership must continue to be a priority in 2013 to ensure that reforms are implemented successfully and drive improvements in student learning. Tennessee has made significant reforms in education over the past several years, reforms that have led to important early gains in student achievement. As the work has shifted from policy development to implementation, the state must remain committed to ensuring reforms are implemented with fidelity.

In addition, since we know that both teachers and leaders play critical roles in improving student achievement outcomes, it is imperative that the state continue to focus on initiatives that will support educators. Tennessee has made significant commitments to raise the bar for what effective teaching looks like in the classroom, recruit teachers who can rise to these expectations,

and support current teachers by providing them with meaningful and ongoing feedback about their performance that helps them build on strengths and address their areas for development. In order for Tennessee to continue to foster great teaching, more work must be done to ensure effective candidates graduate from the state's teacher preparation programs, support current teachers in their development, and develop strategies to retain great teachers.

As Tennessee has begun implementing various reforms, including the new teacher evaluation system and the Common Core State Standards, the importance of having a team of strong instructional leaders in every school and supporting effective school leaders has risen to the forefront. The state department's strategic plan provides a strong framework for improving the effectiveness of school leaders across the state and ensuring that there is a pipeline of talented individuals ready to take on leadership roles. Although the state department's leadership strategy is poised to make substantial improvements in school-level leadership, not enough has been done and this area remains one of high priority in Tennessee.

There are two additional priority areas that present issues for the state to focus on moving forward. First, stakeholders across the state must address the need to better utilize technology to enhance learning for all students. Throughout the country, the use of technology for educational purposes is on the rise. More students than ever before are taking courses online or being exposed to blended learning experiences that infuse traditional instruction with digital components. In Tennes-

see, access to these technologies is informing teachers' instructional practices and providing students with additional avenues for learning outside of the classroom. As the state moves to computer-based assessments, and towards integration of online learning models, there is a need for a thoughtful, well-informed strategy to develop the technological capacity across schools and districts.

Finally, it is important to empower parents with the resources and supports they need to help their children succeed, particularly as the state raises the bar in the classroom through higher academic standards. Research has shown that family engagement in education, in particular having high expectations for children, can lead to improvements in academic achievement.<sup>6</sup> With students spending roughly two-thirds of their time outside of school, it is critical that parents facilitate and reinforce learning at home. Parent engagement in schools must be meaningful and beneficial for both families and schools.

We believe these five priorities will further our goals of preparing every Tennessee student for college and the workforce and ensuring that Tennessee becomes the fastest improving state in the nation.

“  
The importance of having a team of strong instructional leaders in every school and supporting effective school leaders has risen to the forefront.”





**Section I:**  
2012 Year in Review





- 
- January** — 107th General Assembly legislative session convenes
- February** — Tennessee is granted a waiver that frees it from the accountability requirements of No Child Left Behind Act
- March** — General Assembly passes a provision allowing teacher preparation programs access to teacher effect data for their graduates
- April** — General Assembly unanimously passes, and Governor Haslam signs, a bill to keep teacher evaluation scores private
- June** — Tennessee Department of Education releases 2011-12 TCAP scores indicating students make the most academic progress in state history
- SCORE releases report with feedback and recommendations on new teacher evaluation system
- July** — Tennessee Department of Education holds trainings on the Common Core math standards for grades 3-8
- Tennessee Department of Education issues report recommending improvements to the teacher evaluation systems
- August** — Common Core State Standards math implementation begins in grades 3-8
- The State Board of Education approves revisions to teacher and principal evaluations
- The Achievement School District opens for its first day of school
- Tennessee Department of Education announces school and district standings under new state accountability system
- September** — SCORE launches the Expect More, Achieve More Coalition
- October** — SCORE announces the 2012 SCORE Prize winners
- November** — Tennessee Department of Education releases the K-12 Education Report Card
- Tennessee Higher Education Commission releases the 2012 Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs

“  
Early signs of widespread academic progress [in Tennessee] are not only encouraging but inspiring, and will help lay the ground work for further success as Tennessee continues its commitment to leading the nation in education reform.”<sup>7</sup>

– U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan



# Introduction

In August 2011, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan traveled to Tennessee and challenged our schools to become the fastest-improving in the nation. The Secretary's comments reflected the fact that Tennessee's actions to establish itself as a leader in education reform had put the state in a unique position to begin realizing significant gains in student achievement. After several years of making strides in changing policy conditions, 2011-12 was the first year in which many of those reforms were affecting districts, schools, and classrooms statewide. Tennessee showed that it was up to this challenge in education reform, and the hard work is already paying off for students in improved achievement and growth.

Over the last year, the state was faced with significant challenges that occurred as it transitioned from policy development to implementation. The new teacher and principal evaluation system placed new demands on principals and superintendents to be instructional leaders and significantly increased their administrative workload. The transition to the new, higher academic standards necessitated a comprehensive plan for training educators to ensure that instructional practices were altered to prepare students to be critical thinkers. And, the state faced two sets of accountability requirements as it managed the requirements of its Race to the Top grant and the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. In response to these challenges, Governor Bill Haslam called on the state to gather extensive feedback on what enhancements could be made to the evaluation system to ensure that it was leading to improved outcomes for students. The Tennessee Department of Education rolled out a comprehensive plan for implementing new academic standards that includes peer-led trainings, follow up training, and a communication

plan to ensure educators understand what the changes will mean in their classrooms and for their students. Additionally, the state department of education developed an alternative accountability plan that reflects the state's education reform priorities. All stakeholders—including K-12 educators, higher education faculty, the Governor, Tennessee Department of Education, State Board of Education, and General Assembly—have committed to not only implementing new reforms, but also to monitoring progress and making changes that are in the best interest of students.

As a result, Tennessee's students made the most progress in the state's history, even as expectations were rising. Proficiency levels on 23 out of 24 state assessments improved. The state continued to lead the nation in improving high school graduation rates. And, more of the state's high school graduates have enrolled in higher education over the last two years than ever before.

While Tennessee has made significant progress in improving student achievement, maintaining momentum for education reform will not be

easy. Tennessee still has a long way to go to ensure that every student graduates high school prepared for college or the workforce. Halfway through the grant period for Race to the Top, Tennessee is showing impressive progress towards meeting its goals, but some work continues to be delayed as questions of sustainability of the work after the grant period is over are beginning to be asked. The report that follows provides a comprehensive update of the state's progress in improving student achievement. It also analyzes the work that has occurred over the last year in the state's major reform areas— effective teaching and leadership; academic standards and assessments; using student data to improve instruction; implementing innovative practices; and accountability structure and oversight—that have contributed to student achievement gains. Lastly, it highlights promising practices from the field as well as provides recommendations to the state to ensure that we continue on the pathway of preparing all of our students for success in college or the workforce.





# State Academic Results

## Improving Student Achievement

Over the last year, Tennessee’s students improved more than they have in any previous year on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) exams. Data from the 2011-12 school year show that student outcomes improved on 23 out of 24 tested subjects for grades 3-8. Proficiency in reading has steadily increased over the past two years in nearly all grades, and now 50 percent of students are reading at or above grade level. (Eighth grade reading is the only subject in which scores did not increase in 2012.) Math scores showed similarly positive growth. Across the state, 55,000 more students in Tennessee are proficient or advanced in math compared to two years ago. Science scores improved as well, with 60 percent of students scoring proficient or advanced. Over the past two years, proficiency levels in science have increased by more than 15 percentage points, meaning 38,000 more students are at or above grade level in science.<sup>8</sup> While improvements on state assessments are significant, the state must still address the gap between proficiency on state and national assessments, which shows a 20-25 point difference between Tennessee’s assessments and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) exams, which provide a common measure of academic achievement for all states. The transition to the Common Core State standards will help ensure consistency across state, national, and international assessments moving forward. (See Chart 2 on opposite page)

Chart 1: TCAP Reading and Math Proficiency (Grades 3-8)

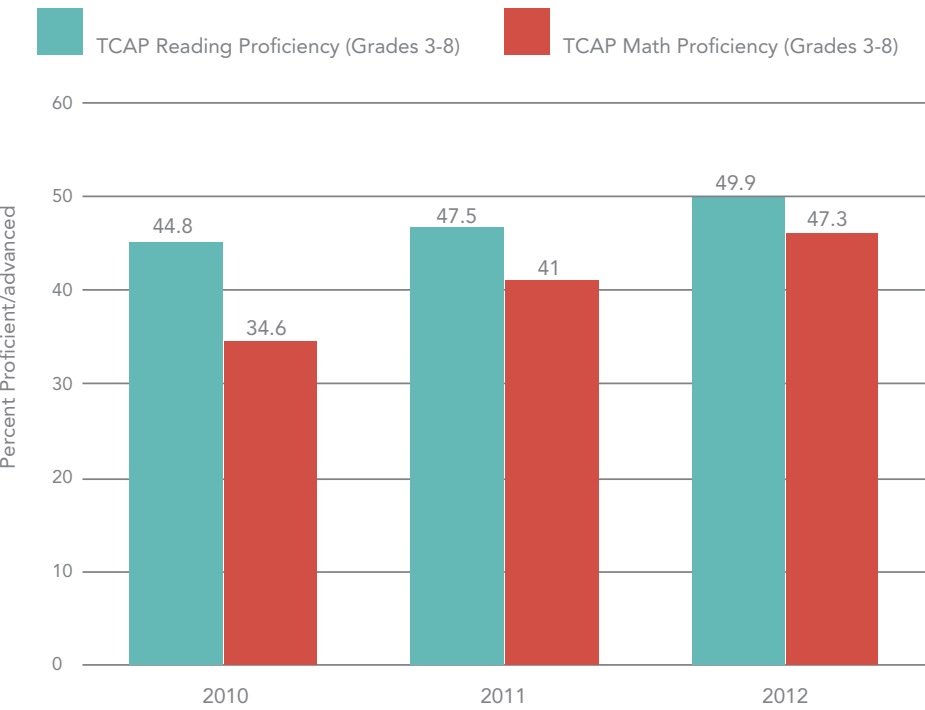


Chart 2: Comparison of Tennessee Proficiency on 2012 TCAP and NAEP (2011)



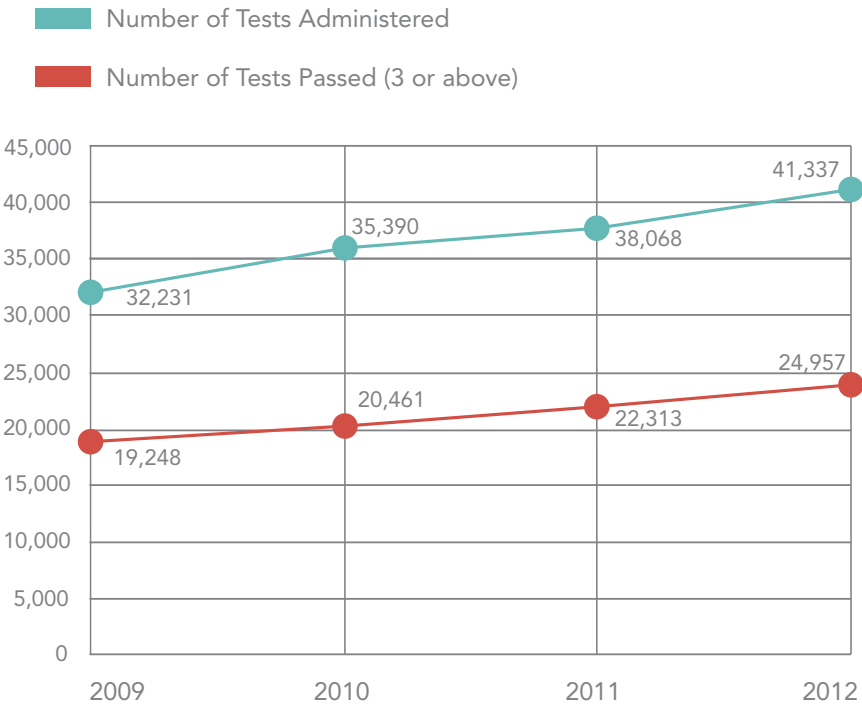
In addition to the significant gains in grades 3 through 8, high school students also made progress in 2012. Achievement increased for most high school end-of-course (EOC) exams. More than half of students taking exams in English I, English II, Algebra I, biology, and history scored proficient or advanced for the first time since Tennessee began raising its academic standards in 2009.<sup>9</sup> The state has also made important progress in increasing student access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses and improving overall achievement. In 2012, 24,924 students enrolled in an AP course—up from 22,816 in 2011—and 60.4 percent passed the final exam – a 1.8 percentage point increase from the year before.<sup>10</sup> (See Chart 3 on pg 17)

## Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards are a set of English/language arts and mathematics standards that were developed by state leaders to ensure that every student graduates high school prepared for college or the workforce, regardless of the state in which they live. Common Core standards are internationally benchmarked, and are designed to promote critical thinking and depth of understanding of course content. Page 28 of this report provides more detailed information on the implementation of the new standards in Tennessee.



Chart 3: Statewide Performance on Advanced Placement Exams 2009-2012



Not only have overall achievement levels increased, but students across the state had positive learning growth as well, meaning that they performed better than expected. In 2012, both math and social studies had positive growth as measured by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) three-year average. This means that students performed above expectations in these subject areas. However, there were negative results in reading/ language arts and science during that same time – meaning that students across the state did not perform as well as projected in these subjects.

Preparing students for success after high school

Tennessee’s plan for improving public education is centered on ensuring that students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. Today’s economy is international, with increased competitiveness not just across the country but across the globe. Tennessee has an obligation to ensure that its students are able to compete with their peers both nationally and internationally. While TCAP and TVAAS provide valuable measures to assess Tennessee students, it is critical to look at indicators that can be compared at a national level.

Since 2010, all Tennessee high school juniors have taken the ACT to measure college and career readiness. Tennessee is one of nine states that require the ACT. Of those nine states, Tennessee and Kentucky had the fastest improving scores from 2010 to 2012. In 2012, ACT composite scores increased from an average score of 19 in 2011 to an average score of 19.2. Overall, the percentage of test-takers meeting all ACT college readiness benchmarks increased from 15 to 16 percent in 2012. Despite this growth, scores in 2012 highlight Tennessee’s continued need to increase college readiness for all students and in particular, for students in various subgroups. Only 3 percent of African American students and 9 percent of Hispanic students met college benchmarks in all core subjects, compared to 18 percent of white students and 31 percent of Asian students.<sup>11</sup>

Chart 4: Comparing Tennessee and National ACT Scores

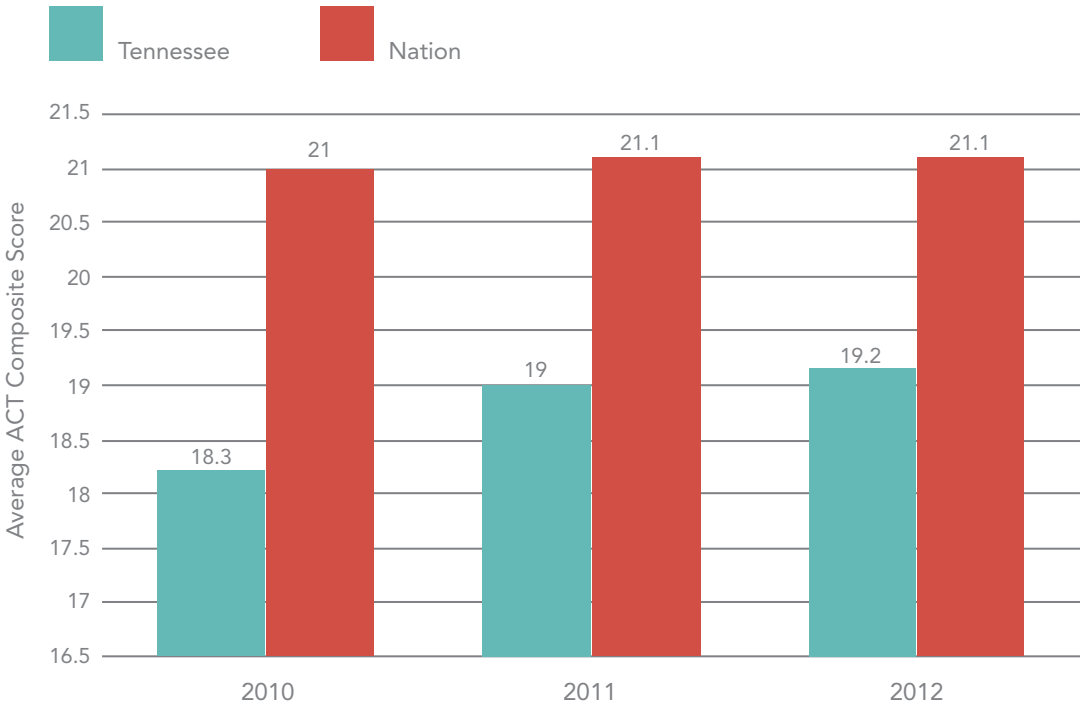
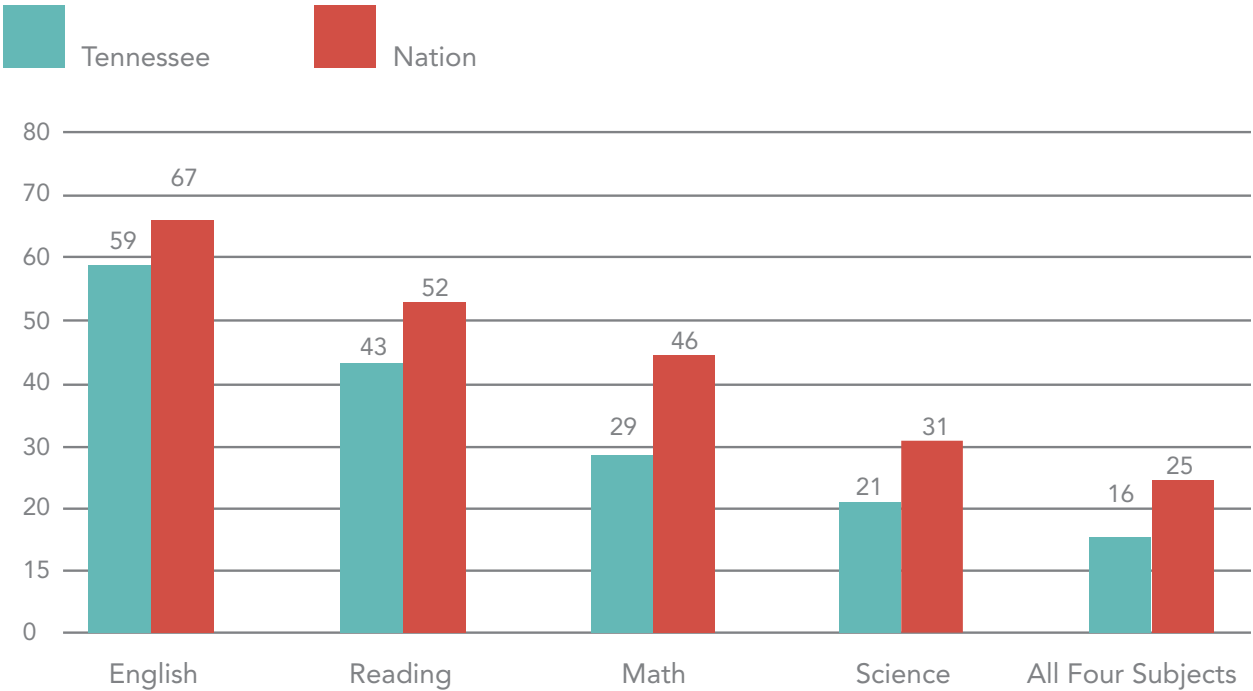


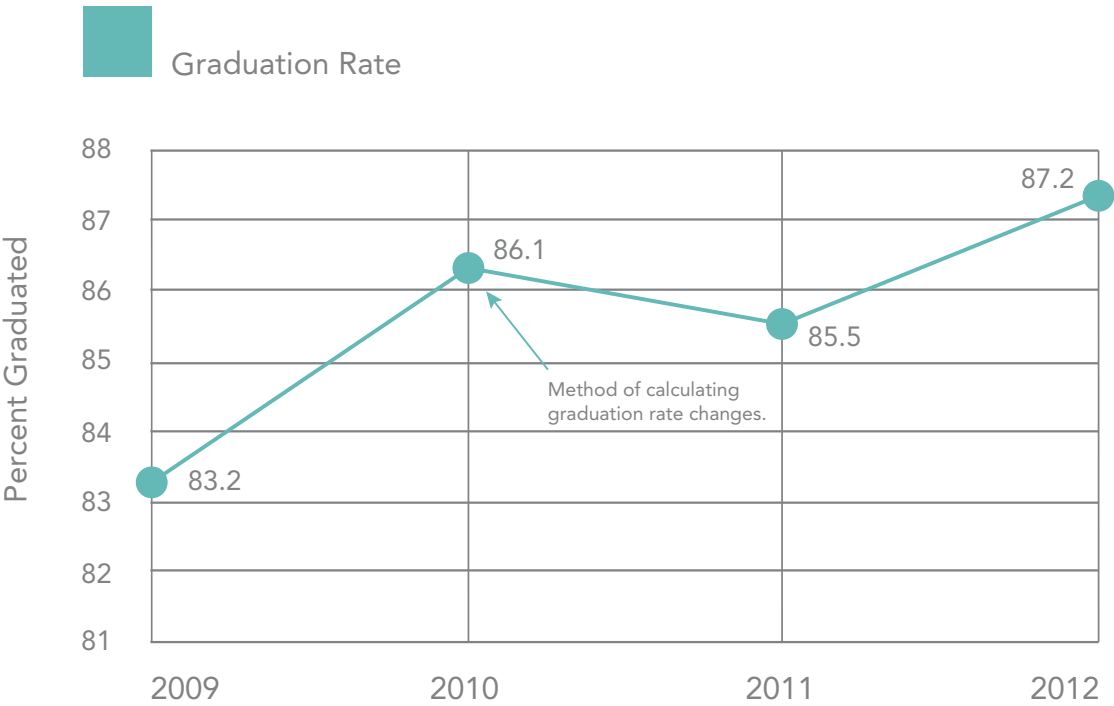
Chart 5: Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject





Other data released in 2012 showed that Tennessee was one of only two states making double-digit gains in increasing high school graduation rates between 2002 and 2009 – with 13,880 additional graduates in 2009.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Department of Education released new graduation rate data for all states that look at the number of first-time 9th graders in each state that graduate with a standard high school diploma within four years. According to these standards, Tennessee students are continuing to perform well compared to their peers nationally. For the 2010-11 school year, Tennessee had the fourth highest graduation rate overall and has the third highest for economically disadvantaged students. In addition, the gap in graduation rates between black and white students is 11 percentage points, which is the sixth smallest across all states.<sup>13</sup> Tennessee’s overall graduation rate continued to improve, reaching 87.2 percent in 2012. In the last two years, Tennessee began measuring graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. In 2011, the graduation rates for those students were 5 to 20 percentage points lower than the state average. In 2012, the graduation rates for students in those subgroups all increased, but are still below the average. The greatest improvement was seen for students with disabilities. The graduation rate for that group increased from 67.4 percent to 72.8 percent.

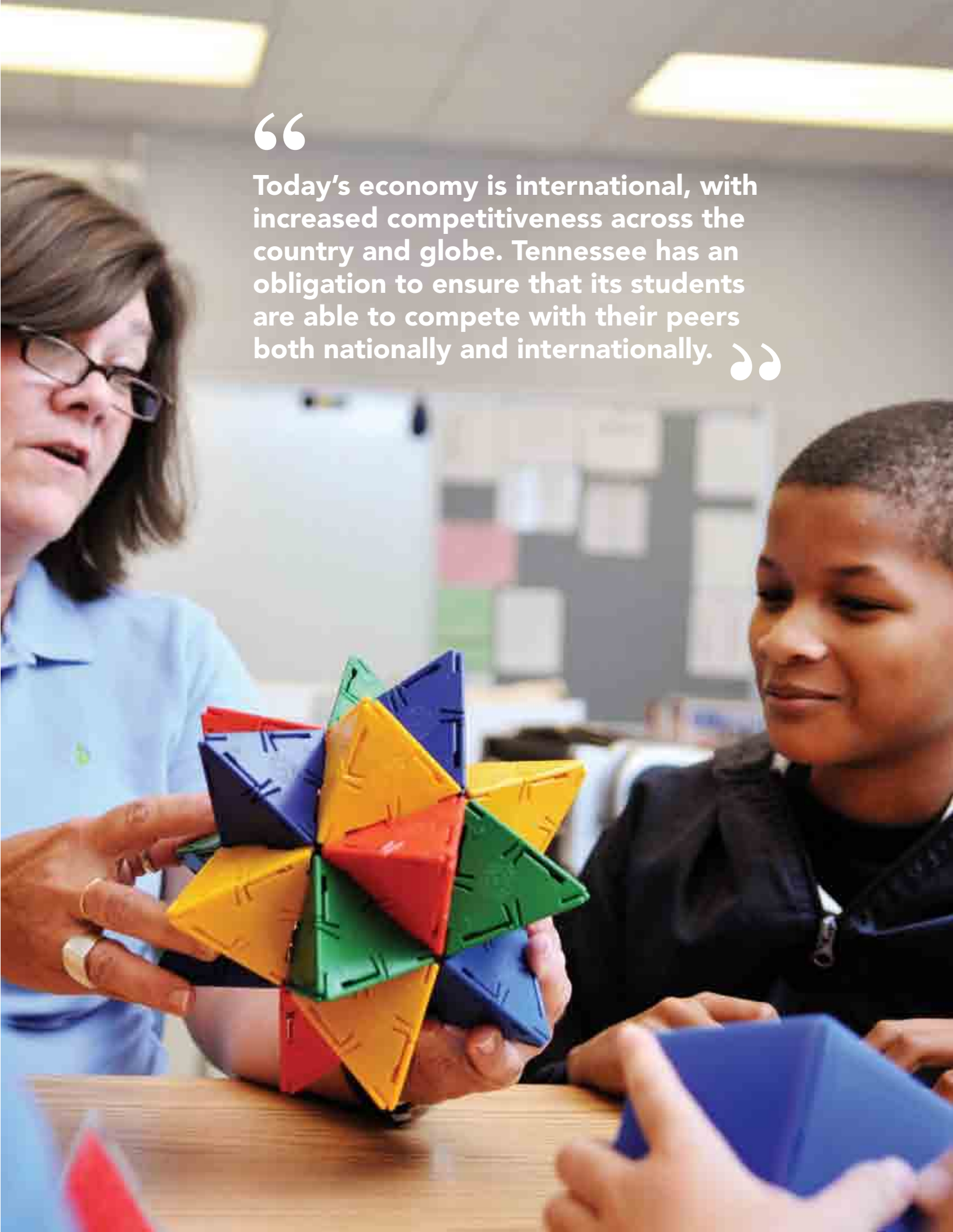
Chart 6: Change in High School Graduation Rate from 2009-2012



After high school graduation, more students in Tennessee have enrolled in higher education in the last two years than ever before. In Fall 2011, more than 183,000 students enrolled for the first time in college in the state of Tennessee. Though the data show a small decline in the number of first time degree-seeking students in 2010, 15 percent more students have enrolled in college since before the implementation of higher academic standards in 2009. Total enrollment of students in public higher education has also increased, with more than 242,000 total students currently pursuing a degree in the state.<sup>14</sup>

Tennessee’s commitment to raising academic standards and efforts to expand access to rigorous curricula for all students should help the state continue to increase high school graduation rates, improve ACT scores, and enroll more students in coursework after high school.

“Today’s economy is international, with increased competitiveness across the country and globe. Tennessee has an obligation to ensure that its students are able to compete with their peers both nationally and internationally.”





# Education Reform In Tennessee

## The Work Behind the Gains

In 2010, Tennessee passed the First to the Top Act, the largest piece of education reform legislation in the state since 1992. This legislation, which has resulted in significant changes to the way the state delivers education, has served as Tennessee’s roadmap for preparing students to compete in the global economy. Two months after passing the act, Tennessee was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as one of two states awarded a first round Race to the Top grant. The award brings more than \$500 million to Tennessee over a period of four years to help support the state’s ambitious plans for comprehensive education reform.

As mentioned earlier in this report, over the last two years, Tennessee has shifted from passing legislation to ensuring that reforms are effectively implemented in districts and schools throughout the state. In 2012, Tennesseans, from educators to policymakers, showed that they were committed to both implementing significant reform and altering parts of the work to ensure that it leads to improved outcomes for

students. To determine the state’s progress in implementing these reforms, SCORE elicited feedback from teachers, principals, administrators, superintendents, higher education faculty, the Tennessee Department of Education, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and other partners throughout the state. SCORE conducted a series of in-depth interviews, six focus groups across the three grand divisions with

principals and teachers, and surveys of superintendents and deans of colleges of education. The update that follows provides an overview of the First to the Top reform plan to which the state is committed and draws on this feedback to identify key areas of progress and challenge in implementation efforts.

### Tennessee’s education reform initiatives focus on the following areas:

- *Effective teaching and leadership*
- *Academic standards and assessments*
- *Using student data to improve instruction*
- *Implementing innovative practices*
- *Accountability structure and oversight*

### Effective Teaching and Leadership

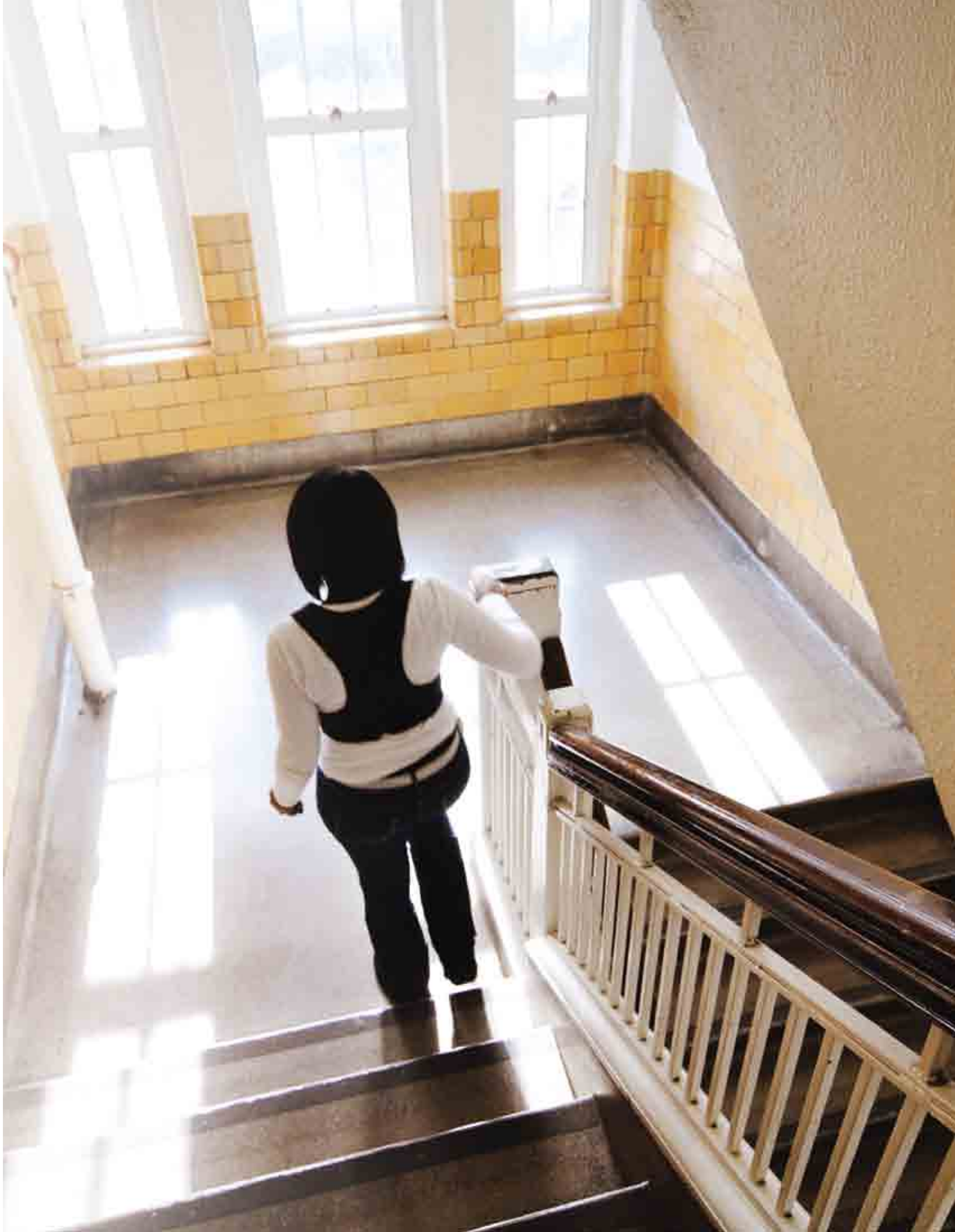
Tennessee has an ambitious reform agenda to ensure the state has effective teachers as well as school and district leaders. The state’s goals include implementing new principal and teacher evaluation systems that affect all human capital decisions, improving teacher and principal effectiveness across all schools,

enhancing teacher and principal preparation programs, and providing data-driven professional development that is linked to student growth.

#### Teacher Evaluation

Tennessee has highlighted the new teacher and principal evaluation systems as the foundation of the First

to the Top work to improve teaching and leadership. Over the last two years, the state revamped educator evaluations so they are based on multiple measures, including student achievement, student growth, and frequent observations designed to support instruction in classroom and school leadership. Both of these systems were rolled out statewide in Fall 2011.





Changes to Tennessee’s Educator Evaluation System	
Old Educator Evaluation System	New Educator Evaluation System
Evaluation was based on classroom observations, teacher self-reflection, and a review of teachers’ professional growth	Evaluation is based on multiple measures, including classroom observations, student achievement data, and student growth data
Teachers with less than three years of experience were formally evaluated once a year. Teachers who had taught for more than three years were formally evaluated twice over a 10-year period	All teachers receive a formal annual evaluation
<b>Four ratings:</b>  Unsatisfactory  Level A – Developing  Level B – Proficient  Level C – Advanced	<b>Five ratings:</b>  1 – Significantly below expectations  2 – Below expectations  3 – Meets expectations  4 – Above expectations  5 – Significantly above expectations
Evaluators were required to provide teachers feedback after each observation cycle, which ranged from three times a year to four times in a decade	All teachers receive timely feedback from observations throughout the year
Evaluations were not required to be used to inform personnel decisions	Evaluations are used to inform human capital decisions, including professional development, assignment, promotion, tenure, and compensation

To aid in the implementation of the new evaluation system, Governor Bill Haslam asked SCORE to conduct an independent process to gather feedback on the evaluation from educators and community members to inform potential improvements. In June 2012, SCORE released *Supporting Effective Teaching in Tennessee*, which catalogues the feedback of more than 27,000 inputs and provides recommendations to improve the system.

SCORE’s recommendations included ensuring that current and prospective teachers and leaders receive sufficient training in the evaluation system, linking feedback that teachers receive with high-quality,

collaborative, and individualized professional learning opportunities, addressing challenges with current quantitative and qualitative measures of teacher effectiveness, and supporting school and district lead-



ers in becoming strong instructional leaders capable of assessing and developing effective teaching.

The Tennessee Department of Education also conducted an internal review of the evaluation system to look at the system’s contribution to improving student achievement and identify barriers that might be inhibiting growth. The Department’s findings suggest that there are inconsistencies across a number of areas. For instance, although most schools and districts made significant academic progress in 2011-12, performance among districts varied greatly. In addition, the majority of teachers exceeded expectations in advancing student achievement,

while one in six fell significantly short of these expectations. Finally, despite significant time devoted to evaluation training, administrators systematically failed to identify the lowest performing teachers.

Informed in part by SCORE’s report and the state’s feedback process, the Department issued a series of recommendations regarding the teacher evaluation system in July 2012. These recommendations focused on expanding the number of teachers who have access to individual value-added data, ensuring evaluators receive sufficient training to use the results to connect teachers with professional learning opportunities, and allowing teachers to receive different numbers of observations based on their effectiveness level. Taking the Department’s recommendations into consideration, the State Board of Education approved changes to the model in August 2012 for the second year of its use.<sup>15</sup> The key changes include: (1) the minimum number of observations is based on licensure status as well as evaluation scores from the previous years; (2) the 15 percent achievement measures deemed incapable of returning data in a timely manner were removed from the list of possible measures; (3) the Department worked to develop better growth measures for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects; (4) at the school level, new

school-wide growth scores based on subsets of student data are available.

To support all districts in providing teachers with effective professional learning opportunities aligned with their teacher evaluation results, the Department has plans to produce a professional development report card that would provide districts with a framework of what effective professional learning looks like. The Department also plans to provide support to districts with a significant difference between value-added and observation scores to better align the quantitative and qualitative metrics. To address this challenge, the Department has hired 10 support coaches to work with schools that have the weakest relationship between quantitative and qualitative data on the evaluation system.

Over the last year, the state has done significant work to both eval-

uate the implementation of the new evaluation system and its impact on student achievement outcomes. By gathering feedback from thousands of educators and community members and making revisions to the model based on that feedback, the evaluation system will further enable educators to improve outcomes for their students. Additionally, the Tennessee General Assembly unanimously passed a bill in April 2012, which Governor Haslam then

# From the Field: Teacher Evaluation

One of the prominent successes that surfaced during interviews and roundtables was that, for the first time, educators have clearer and more rigorous performance expectations and have an understanding of what constitutes great teaching. “Never before have teachers known what the expectations are,” an educator said. “Now they have a list and great guidance about what good teaching looks like.” Educators consistently said this concept of good teaching was very closely aligned with what will be required of them in order to teach Common Core standards. Additionally, educators said that the system requires principals to be instructional leaders who understand and support effective teaching in their schools. However, educators voiced concern that many teachers do not yet have access to high quality professional learning tied to their evaluation to help them improve their practice. Many also noted that not all principals and evaluators have the instructional leadership skills that the new system requires. As one principal said, **“What you do once you have that honest professional conversation [is important]. We cannot just say ‘good luck.’”**



signed, to keep the results of the teacher evaluation process private.<sup>16</sup> This is important because it allows for refinements to be made to the evaluation system without subjecting educators to public scrutiny. However, as the system is improved, parents and community members may push for greater transparency. As implementation of the new evaluation system progresses, it is crucial that the state continue to make refinements to the system without sacrificing the original vision.

#### **Teacher Preparation**

Tennessee is one of a few states that has been able to link teacher performance data back to an individual teacher's preparation program and has made the results available through the Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs, which has been published every year since 2008. The 2012 Report Card shows that while there are several programs producing highly effective graduates across the state, there is also significant work to be done to ensure that all teacher candidates are entering the field ready to effectively educate all children. While the Report Card highlights broad areas in need of improvement, refinements could be made to make it a more useful tool for programs. In particular, detailed information on specific areas within a preparation program (such as the difference between graduate and undergraduate program performance) would help pinpoint areas that need to be strengthened. As a dean at a college of education in Tennessee said, "More comprehensive identification of graduates and the ability to accurately identify graduates associated with specific programs would be helpful."<sup>17</sup>

In 2012, the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation allowing teacher preparation programs to have access to value-added data for

their graduates. With this change in legislation, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) plans to provide individual program reports that will dig deeper into the data and enable programs to have a more in depth analysis of their graduates' performance in the classroom. The first set of individual program reports is anticipated to be released in March 2013, with a second set to be released with the public Report Card in November 2013.<sup>18</sup>

As reforms are implemented in schools and districts across the state, it is critical that prospective teachers receive the appropriate training before they enter the classroom. In Tennessee's current landscape, this means that teacher candidates need to understand the new teacher evaluation system, how to teach the Common Core standards, and how to use the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data to improve instruction.

The Tennessee Department of Education and THEC have collaborated on initiatives that will support this work. To ensure that teacher preparation programs had access to resources on the new educator evaluation system, the state department asked higher education institutions to help host the training session and also invited faculty to attend. In 2012, the Department partnered with the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation at Lipscomb University to facilitate the Higher Education Common Core Advisory Board. This group, which is composed of deans and faculty from Tennessee colleges of education, is partnering with the Department to develop videos of best practices and facilitate trainings with higher education faculty on the Common Core standards. The Institute is also involved in the work to develop and provide training opportunities for prospective teachers to begin implementation of Common Core

standards from their first day in the classroom.

Additionally, THEC has worked with the SAS institute, the company that provides TVAAS data for the state, to develop online modules, with accompanying guides, to train pre-service teachers on the use of TVAAS data. The modules are not mandatory, but THEC hopes that most programs will be using them by the Fall of 2013. Although the effectiveness of these specific training modules is still being evaluated, they are a crucial part of ensuring that future educators know how to accurately use data to improve their instructional practice and help all students succeed.

#### **Statewide Leadership Strategy**

In 2012, the Tennessee Department of Education developed a strategic plan to improve the effectiveness of school leaders across the state and ensure there is a pipeline of talented individuals ready to take on leadership roles. The plan focuses on teacher leadership, leadership preparation, recruitment and hiring, licensure, evaluation, and professional development. The state department's plan, centered on connecting all leadership initiatives, provides a strong framework for improving the effectiveness of school leaders across the state and ensuring that there is a pipeline of talented individuals ready to take on leadership roles. This revised approach to instructional leadership focuses on strengthening leadership at all phases of an educator's career and expands school leadership beyond that of the principal. This shift is intended to change the focus of the statewide conversation and practice of school-level leadership from building management to instructional leadership through a shared model that relies on a team of strong leaders.

The foundation of this work has







been the ongoing review of the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS). The Department is revising the leadership standards, which are based on a national model, so that they emphasize the school leader's role in talent management and improving student achievement. The state department has engaged in extensive work to revise the standards during the Fall of 2012, and plans to share this work more broadly prior to presenting recommendations to the State Board of Education in January 2013.

**Although the state's leadership strategy is poised to make substantial improvements in school-level leadership, to date, not enough has been done and this area remains one of high priority in Tennessee.** The changes in the teacher evaluation system and implementation of the Common Core standards have highlighted the need for effective instructional leadership in schools. In order to leverage their educators' ability to serve as leaders, schools and districts in Tennessee will need to adopt a distributed leadership model that empowers both teachers and principals to serve as leaders in their schools. Furthermore, the Department will need to develop and execute a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure that schools and districts understand the new instructional leadership standards and the changes that will be made to align training, support, and evaluation.

## Standards and Assessments

### *Transition to Common Core State Standards*

In July 2010, the State Board of Education adopted the *Common Core State Standards*, a set of internationally competitive standards developed by state leaders based on research about what it takes to be prepared for college courses and entry level jobs that lead to careers. Beginning in the Fall of 2011, the state embarked on a multi-year plan to phase in the standards with full implementation set for the 2013-14 school year. The adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards will help ensure that public schools in Tennessee are preparing students to be successful after high school.

The Common Core standards are designed to help students understand subjects in greater depth. They also require students to use more critical thinking and problem solving skills compared to the state's current standards. This requires both students and teachers to engage in new approaches to classroom learning. The Tennessee Department of Education has initiated a significant strategy to help educators make the transition to the new standards. In early 2012, the Department selected 13 school directors, supervisors, and assistant principals to serve on the Common Core Leadership Council, a group that is responsible for advising the Department on the Common

Core transition as well as managing different aspects of the work. For example, the Leadership Council was



instrumental in vetting and selecting 338 highly effective educators to serve as Common Core coaches to facilitate summer training sessions to build regional capacity for ongoing support. In July 2012, these coaches helped train more than 10,000 teachers, principals, higher education faculty, and other partners at 41 sites across the state.

The Department is also utilizing math consultants brought on through its Race to the Top contract with Battelle for Kids to work in partnership with the Centers of Regional Excellence (formerly the field service centers) to provide ongoing support to schools throughout the school year. (See call-out box on page 32.) In the latter part of 2012, the Department hired additional Common Core coaches as well as Common Core Leadership coaches to support ongoing implementation. The Department has also formed an English

# Transition to Common Core State Standards

Grades K-2  
Math & ELA  
2011-2012

Grades 3-8  
Math (partial)  
2012-2013

Grades 3-8 Math  
(full) & ELA; Grades  
9-12 Math & ELA;  
Grades 6-12  
Literacy 2013-2014



## From the Field: Common Core

During SCORE's process to gather feedback across the state on recent reform efforts, educators consistently said they were excited about the potential of the Common Core State Standards to provide a pathway for all students to be successful after high school. In those districts that had already begun implementing the standards, educators were encouraged by the progress they have seen their students make. "What we've seen is we did not have high enough expectations of our kids," one principal said. "They can do a lot more than we thought they could." Educators also said that the standards are raising the bar not only for students, but for teachers as well. "I think my teachers feel more challenged than they have in a long time. It has challenged them and allowed them more freedom and allowed them to feel more professional about themselves than they have in the past," another principal said. Educators also praised the training they received in Summer 2012 on the new 3-8 math standards, saying that it was high quality training that would lead them to change their instructional practice. Many said they appreciated the depth of the training, which went beyond highlighting what the standards are to modeling what a lesson would actually look like and discussing common student problems they might expect. Additionally, educators said they appreciated the use of current Tennessee teachers as providers of the training. "When a fellow teacher leads trainings, it feels like support," one teacher said. "You feel like we're doing it together."

While educators had positive reactions to both the promise of Common Core and the state's implementation plan, many had reservations, particularly with regard to the state's previous implementation plan for Common Core and ensuring there is ongoing support for teachers to implement the standards with the depth that Common Core necessitates. For many, the quality of the 3-8 math training highlighted the lack of guidance and support that was provided to K-2 educators who began implementation in 2011-12. "If you would have asked my [K-2] teachers if they were teaching Common Core last year, they would have said yes," one principal said. "But now that they're seeing a complex performance task, they will say that they weren't doing that." **Educators consistently said it was important to ensure that teachers had both the pedagogical skills and the depth of content knowledge needed to teach the standards and help those students who have experienced many years of education before Common Core succeed.**

Language Arts Leadership Council – composed of district instructional supervisors – who have recruited and finalized a list of more than 60 districts to participate in a Common Core English language arts pilot during the 2012-13 school year. The Department is planning to host additional Common Core trainings in the summer of 2013 for K-8 math follow up, 9-12 math, K-5 reading, and 6-12 English language arts and literacy.

To increase awareness of the Common Core standards, the Department launched the website, [www.tnccore.org](http://www.tnccore.org), in April 2012 to serve as the primary outlet for information on implementation to reach educators and instructional leaders. In September 2012, SCORE re-launched the *Expect More, Achieve More Coalition*, a statewide alliance of more than 150 business, community, and education organizations in Tennessee that supports high academic standards in public education ([www.expectmoretn.org](http://www.expectmoretn.org)). The Coalition's goal is to build statewide and local engagement, support, and awareness of the state's efforts to raise the bar in the class-

room so that every student graduates high school prepared for postsecondary and the workforce. In the Fall of 2012, the Coalition distributed over 500,000 brochures to parents across the state about the importance of high academic standards and the shift to the Common Core.

**Over the last year, the Department's work to offer high quality training and engage educators as partners in the state's Common Core implementation plan has been an important strategy to ensure that educators not only teach higher standards but also change their practice in a way that prepares students for college and career.** It is crucial that the Department continue its work to enhance district capacity through the support of the Centers of Regional Excellence and other peer leaders. It will also be important to continue to examine ways that high quality resources can be shared.



### PARCC Assessments

States that are implementing the Common Core State Standards have the opportunity to develop assessments that are aligned with the new, more rigorous expectations. Tennessee, along with 22 other states, belongs to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which is in the process of developing an assessment system

that is aligned with Common Core standards. This new assessment will gauge student learning progress both throughout the academic year and at the end of courses.<sup>19</sup> By the 2014-15 school year, the PARCC assessments will replace the math, English/language arts, and writing TCAP assessments that are currently administered.

To provide results in a timelier manner to schools so that data can be used immediately to inform instruction, interventions for students, and plans for professional learning, PARCC assessments will be administered through an online platform. Although PARCC plans to offer a paper and pencil version as well, the computer based exam will be necessary for schools and districts to receive results quickly to help adjust instruction. The move to computer-based assessments requires a thoughtful, well-informed strategy to develop the technological capacity across schools and districts. As part of the statewide transition to PARCC assessments, the Tennessee Department of Education implemented a constructed response and writing assessment aligned with the Common Core standards during the 2012-13 school year. However, Tennessee does not yet have a comprehensive plan for implementing online assessments statewide, which presents a considerable challenge given the amount of work that must be done within a short timeframe.

### Using Student Data

The state's primary goal with regard to data has been to ensure that information on student achievement and growth is accessible and used to inform and improve instruction. In early 2011, all teachers were provided with individual accounts to access data for their specific classroom and school directly from the SAS Institute, the company that provides Tennessee's value-added



analysis. Additional progress in data availability came this year when the Tennessee Department of Education released value-added data to schools and districts in June, the earliest release of these data in state history. The TVAAS data were also loaded into the evaluation data system for educators to access. While it is significant that the state was able to move up the release date of value-added data, there is still a consensus among educators that an even faster turnaround for results would be beneficial in improving instruction for their students and enabling districts to make human capital decisions based, in part, on student achievement data. It is critical that the state continue to look for ways to provide more immediate results on state tests. The use of online assessments with PARCC implementation may help make this a reality.

The state has also been working to develop an Early Warning Data System, which will enable educators to see real-time indicators for at-risk students so they can craft effective academic interventions to keep more students on track to high school graduation and postsecondary readiness. In April 2012, the system was piloted in 10 districts to provide the state with feedback in advance of a statewide rollout. The Department has plans to combine this work with other data, such as teacher evaluation data, and provide it on a common web platform. The state currently has plans for a small scale release in Spring 2013 with trainings planned for Summer 2013. The state has also been working with the University of Tennessee's Center for Business and Economic Research to create a database that will combine information from a variety of agencies, including higher education and health and human services, to track data on students from prekindergarten through postsecondary.

The system, known as a P-20 longitudinal data system, will be used to provide the state with additional information about students' progression along the pathway to postsecondary education and training.

From the beginning of the Race to the Top grant period, the Department has worked to build local capacity to interpret data to differentiate instruction. Through an early partnership with Battelle for Kids, the Department trained 25-30 educators as regional value-added specialists to build local capacity on using value-added and formative assessment data. Additionally, Battelle for Kids has offered online courses to K-12 educators and higher education faculty on these topics. For the 2012-13 school year, the state has hired data analysts to work in each of the eight Centers of Regional Excellence to continue this work with districts. *(See call-out box on page 32.)*

While the Department has made progress in building educator capacity to understand and use data to inform decisions for students, there is still significant work remaining. The statewide rollout of the Early Warning Data System (originally set for Fall 2011) has been continually delayed due to lengthy contracting processes, a change in vendors and project direction, as well as technical issues. These delays have limited the ability of educators, particularly those in small and rural districts who do not have the funds to create their own systems, to use this information to make changes to ensure that more of their students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary and career. It will also be important that the Department, aided by the Centers of Regional Excellence, continues to support districts in using data to drive academic interventions at the classroom, school, and district levels. The Department should also work to

share relevant information it gains from the statewide longitudinal data system

to help districts address systemic issues. An example could include sharing information with a district about workforce demands so the district can ensure its students have the skills they need to compete for jobs.

### Innovative Practices

#### Achievement School District

Over the last two years, Tennessee has redefined the way that it identifies and supports the state's underperforming schools. Aligned with its First to the Top plan and the work outlined in its approved waiver from some provisions of No Child Left Behind, Tennessee has implemented two key strategies. One strategy is the development of an Achievement School District, which allows the state to intervene in the bottom 5 percent of schools. The other strategy provides districts with the flexibility to turn around low performing schools through the establishment of Innovation Zones.

As part of the First to the Top Act passed in 2010, the General Assembly provided the Commissioner of Education the authority to take over persistently fail-



## Centers of Regional Excellence

In order to help Tennessee become the fastest improving state in the nation on student achievement outcomes, the Tennessee Department of Education has renewed its focus on providing regional support to local school districts. This focus has been reflected in the restructuring of the Department's field service centers – which traditionally focused on compliance – into Centers of Regional Excellence that are focused on providing targeted and differentiated support to help districts meet student achievement goals. To make this transition, the state has hired strategic planning directors for each of the state's grand divisions. Each of the eight offices – which have replaced the nine field service centers – has hired a director, a data analyst, and a math coordinator. At the state level, a chief district support officer and senior director have been hired to oversee the work statewide.

In 2012-13, the Centers of Regional Excellence have been charged with helping districts understand how to use data to drive decision making and help schools effectively implement Common Core standards in math. The Centers are also working with the Department's Teacher and Leader division to develop a principal bootcamp that will focus on five areas: understanding standards and curriculum, high quality standards-based instruction, balanced assessment, responding to student learning outcomes, and developing and facilitating professional learning communities (PLCs).

In the future, the Centers have plans to hire special education advisors, early childhood advisors, and fiscal advisors who will help districts think about how to align and maximize resources to improve student achievement. **By restructuring the field service centers, the Department has begun the important work to enhance district capacity to carry out the significant reforms to which the state is committed.** As the Department continues with this strategy, it will be important to ensure that those districts that need help the most have access to these supports. The state will also need to harness technology to overcome the geographical challenge of managing these offices and ensuring that best practices can be shared among them.



ing schools and create a new state-run Achievement School District (ASD). Before the 2012-13 school year, the ASD engaged in work to finalize its management strategy and build capacity. Early programmatic efforts included co-managing a subset of ASD-eligible schools with their home district and assigning field staff to all ASD-eligible schools to develop interventions.

Currently, the ASD has two main roles. First, the ASD serves as an

operator, directly managing schools in the bottom 5 percent statewide. Second, the ASD has the authority to authorize organizations to open charter schools to assist in turnaround efforts. In Fall 2012, the ASD began directly managing three schools in Memphis. Additionally, Gestalt Community Schools, Cornerstone Prep, and LEAD Public Schools converted three additional schools in Memphis and Nashville to charter schools. The state plans

to add 12 additional schools to the ASD in 2013-14 and 17 more in 2014-15 for a total of 35 schools. These schools will either be directly managed by the ASD or converted into charters.

In Spring 2012, the state awarded grants to establish Innovation Zones in Memphis and Nashville. Innovation Zones offer these districts flexibility to make financial, programmatic, staffing, and time allocation decisions in low performing schools.

Overview of School Turnaround Initiatives

	2012-2013	Change	2013-2014	Change	2014-2015
ASD	6 schools	+ 12	18 schools	+17	35 schools
LEA Innovation Zones	9 schools	+9	18 schools	+12 -2	28 schools
SIG turnarounds	35 schools		35 schools	-13	22 schools
LEA-led turnaround	35 schools	-21	14 schools	-14	0 schools

Source: Tennessee’s ESEA Waiver Request, November 2011.

Because schools may transition out of the ASD after five years, it is crucial that the ASD teams work closely with the schools’ home districts to ensure a smooth transition back. Additionally, the state should ensure that efforts are underway to study the effects of the ASD and Innovation Zones so that best practices can be highlighted and shared with other districts undergoing turnaround efforts.

Public Charter Schools

The number of public charter schools in the state has increased significantly in the past several years, following significant legislative changes. Three significant changes to public charter school laws were enacted in 2011 and went into effect in 2012. First, the state legislature lifted eligibility requirements to allow any student within a

charter’s zone to attend—a policy known as open enrollment. Second, the legislature removed the cap on the number of charters that can be opened in the state. Third, the ASD began its inaugural year as a charter school authorizer for those schools identified in the bottom 5 percent in the state in terms of student achievement. These shifts in the law reflect a growing trend of bipartisan support for charter schools and were enacted with the support of Governor Bill Haslam.

These changes are significant largely because they broaden the impact of public charter schools beyond the populations originally targeted by charter laws. In the past, Tennessee law placed restrictions on who could attend charter schools, reserving them for failing students, students enrolled in chronically underper-

forming schools, or the economically disadvantaged.<sup>20</sup> Strong majorities in both legislative houses pushed for the shift to the open enrollment policy recently amended to the law. Additionally, the Tennessee General Assembly passed several bills in 2012 that impact the accountability, finance, and application processes for public charter schools.

There are currently 48 public charter schools operating in the state, located in Davidson, Hamilton, and Shelby counties. Projections for the number of new charter schools slated to open in the 2013-14 school year range anywhere from 18 to 25, but could be even higher depending on the number of charters authorized by the ASD.<sup>21</sup> In the 2012-13 school year nearly 13,000 students enrolled in charter schools across the state, compared with less than







10,000 in 2011-2012.<sup>22</sup> There are a number of charter schools in Tennessee that outperform their neighboring traditional schools. However, there are also a handful of charters that are underperforming. **The state should take this opportunity to learn from the high performing public charter schools and share their practices for dramatically improving student achievement with educators across the state.** Equally important is the way information is disseminated to the expanded range of parents and students affected by recent changes to the law. It is imperative that the state’s reporting systems for collecting school performance data are transparent to the public, in order for parents to make informed decisions about their children’s education.

**STEM Education**

An increased focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education plays an important role in Tennessee’s First to the Top work. STEM not only refers to the subject areas it represents, but also

to innovative teaching methods that integrate technology, are inquiry based, and facilitate active learning.

The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network is a public-private collaboration between the Tennessee Department of Education and the Battelle Memorial Institute. The Network is intended to serve as the primary vehicle for aligning and coordinating STEM education policies, practices, and partners. Through the Network’s two key structural components –STEM Platform Schools and Regional STEM Innovation Hubs – it can help bring technology solutions and innovations to districts across the state. Hubs represent the center of STEM activity in the region, and are a formal partnership between school districts, higher education, businesses, and community organizations. Platform schools are supported by the Hubs in each region and act as a laboratory for investigating, creating, and integrating STEM teaching and learning models. Platform schools vary across the state. For example, some are new schools while some are programs

within existing schools. Hub directors support the platform schools and stay aware of STEM initiatives and share best practices.

The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network seeks to leverage the state’s STEM resources in fields such as heavy industry and agriculture to provide opportunities for students by using the knowledge of K-12 education, higher education, and business and community partnerships. Through its hubs in rural areas of the state, the Network is able to improve access to technology and equipment necessary to enhance learning across STEM subjects. For example, the Upper Cumberland Rural STEM Initiative has partnered with higher education and business to develop a mobile classroom and laboratory that will provide technology and state-of-the-art equipment to students across 21 districts. With infrastructure now fully funded, the Network will direct its focus to cultivating best practices and long term sustainability.

Tennessee STEM Innovation Network		
Regional STEM Innovation Hub	STEM School	Fall 2012 Enrollment
ETSU Northeast STEM Innovation Hub Johnson City	Innovation Academy of Northeast Tennessee	160
Middle TN STEM Innovation Hub Nashville	Stratford STEM Magnet High School	685
	Isaac Littotn Middle School	320
	Bailey STEM Magnet Middle School	448
	Hattie Cotton STEM Magnet Elementary	442
Southeast TN STEM Innovation Hub Chattanooga	STEM School Chattanooga	75
STEMspark East TN Innovation Hub Knoxville	L&N STEM Academy	360
Upper Cumberland Rural STEM Initiative Cookeville	Prescott South Elementary School	506
	Prescott South Middle School	781
West TN STEM Collaboratory Memphis	*Southwind High School set to open in Fall 2013	
Total enrollment across state		3,777



Through Race to the Top funds, the state awarded grants to higher education institutions to implement innovative professional development for K-12 teachers in STEM subject areas. In 2012, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission awarded 18 STEM Professional Development Grants to seven postsecondary institutions. These grants are being used to serve more than 300 teachers in a wide range of school districts throughout the state. One of the goals of these grants is to identify best practices in STEM professional development and share those practices across the state. In talking with both higher education and K-12 faculty participating in the professional development, it seems that the state's intentions for sharing best practices are not widely known. Once effective professional development has been identified, the Department and the Network should work to ensure that educators are aware of and know how to access the resources that are available to them.

Tennessee is working to increase the number of math and science teachers in the state through the innovative UTeach program. The program recruits undergraduate students majoring in STEM fields into a specialized teacher training program. Tennessee has the UTeach program in place at four state institutions, two of which were established with Race to the Top funds. In 2012, all four programs increased enrollment to train a total of 584 students in 2012-13. Middle Tennessee State University had the largest increase from 98 to 215 students between Spring 2012 and Fall 2012; the University of Tennessee-Knoxville began with 94 students in the spring of 2012 and grew to 184 by the fall; the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga enrolled 123 students, up from 77 in the spring; and the University of Memphis increased from 54 to 62

students. The first cohort will graduate this coming spring with about 15 expected to complete the program among the four institutions.

## Accountability and Oversight

### NCLB Waiver

Tennessee's accountability system changed significantly in early 2012 when the United States Department of Education granted the state a waiver that provides flexibility from the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. NCLB requires states receiving federal funds to administer statewide assessments and to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) across subgroups of students – the ultimate goal was 100 percent student proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014. Over time, the 100 percent goal proved burdensome for many states. Without the waiver, the Tennessee Department of Education estimated that 80 percent of schools and 40 percent of districts would fail to reach AYP in 2011-2012. Such a measurement system would thus make it difficult to distinguish performance levels to determine the types of interventions that struggling schools and districts would need to improve. In addition, under NCLB, schools could be penalized in states such as Tennessee where academic standards were raised to better prepare students for the future, as increasing academic standards has typically led to decreased proficiency results while students and teachers adjust to the increased rigor.

Tennessee's alternate accountability structure identifies three groups of schools based on measures of student achievement and growth: (1) Reward Schools, (2) Focus Schools, and (3) Priority Schools. Reward Schools are the 10 percent of schools performing at the highest levels, with 5 percent based on

achievement and the other 5 percent based on overall achievement growth. Reward Schools are eligible for competitive funding to share their best practices with other schools and communities. Focus Schools are the 10 percent of schools with the largest achievement gaps, subgroup proficiency rates below 5 percent, or high schools with graduation rates lower than 60 percent. Focus schools may compete for approximately \$10 million in grant funds to implement improvement plans. Fifty-six focus schools received grants through Race to the Top in Fall 2012 to implement innovative strategies to close achievement gaps. Priority Schools are the 5 percent of schools with the lowest performance levels in tested grades and subjects. Priority Schools will either be taken into the Achievement School District or will develop and implement improvement strategies at the local level. The state will award grants to eligible Priority schools to support improvement efforts and provide professional development experiences for Priority principals.

Districts are also separated into three groups based on overall achievement levels, as well as the achievement of individual groups of students. District designations include: (1) Exemplary, (2) In Need of Improvement, or

## From the Field: Collaboration

When reflecting on their overall impressions of First to the Top implementation, educators consistently discussed increased collaboration to improve student achievement as a positive outcome of the work. Collaboration – among teachers and principals and across schools and districts – has been highlighted as the result of several efforts occurring at both the state and district levels. **Educators pointed to implementing Common Core State Standards and the new teacher evaluation system as efforts that have encouraged collaboration among teachers.** “This system allows for collaboration that in the past we haven’t had,” one teacher said when discussing the new evaluation system. “Before, in my classroom, I did things a certain way and if it didn’t yield the results I wanted, I was kind of stumped. Now teachers are helping each other and willing to share.” When discussing Common Core, educators highlighted the way the standards were compelling teachers to collaborate across grade levels and disciplines.

Many districts have pointed to the focus on developing and strengthening professional learning communities as a vehicle that will enhance Common Core implementation and enable them to easily implement future reforms. “That’s one of the strengths,” one superintendent said. “When this grant runs out, we’ll be able to sustain the work because we have built the capacity we need.” In rural areas, many districts are forming regional consortia of districts and higher education partners to enhance the professional learning networks of their teachers and school leaders and enable the districts to pool resources and expertise to implement reforms.

At the state level, the Tennessee Department of Education has also facilitated collaboration among educators by revamping the professional learning opportunities that it provides. At the Common Core trainings in Summer 2012, the Department required districts to participate in trainings as school teams that included both teachers and administrators. At the end of the training, these teams were encouraged to use the remaining time to devise school implementation plans for the standards. Additionally, at the annual LEADership conference in October 2012, the majority of the two and a half day training called on districts and schools that had been effective in improving student outcomes to share their best practices with their colleagues in interactive workshops. Lastly, the work of the Centers of Regional Excellence will further enhance best practice sharing among districts. As the state continues with its work, it will be important to continue supporting these learning networks to ensure that districts and schools have the capacity to sustain the work after the Race to the Top grant period is over.



Overview of First to the Top Projects and Spending		
Priority Area	Projects	Four Year Budget
State Success Factors (Implementation)	1. Oversight Team 2. Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, & Development (TNCRED)	\$6,500,00
Standards and Assessments	1. Common Core Transition 2. Integrating Common Core into Teacher Preparation	\$7,400,000
Data Systems	1. P20 Longitudinal Data System 2. Early Warning System 3. TVAAS Training in Teacher Preparation 4. Integrating Data to Improve Instruction (Battelle for Kids and SAS)	\$21,300,000
Teachers and Leaders	1. School Leader Study 2. UTeach 3. Residency Programs 4. Innovation Acceleration Fund (strategic comp grants) 5. Integrating Data to Improve Instruction (BFK and SAS) 6. Nashville Public TV/ELC 7. Teacher and Principal Evaluation 8. TELL Survey 9. Distinguished Professionals 10. Teach TN 11. Teacher Prep Report Card 12. Leadership Action Tank 13. SITES M 14. Rural Literacy 15. Oak Ridge STEM Leadership Academy 16. Competitive Supplemental Fund (grants to small LEAs)	\$87,300,000
School Turnaround	1. Achievement School District 2. Priority Schools 3. Focus Schools 4. Reward Schools 5. College Access and Success Network 6. Charter School Fund	\$105,200,000
Competitive Priorities (STEM)	1. STEM Innovation Network 2. STEM Professional Development	\$22,700,000
Subgrants to LEAs	1. Districts' Scopes of Work	\$250,400,000
Total	32 Projects	\$500,741,220

Source: Tennessee Department of Education (2012)

(3) In Need of Subgroup Improvement. Exemplary Districts are recognized, given the ability to plan for the coming year without Department approval, given priority consideration for any Department-issued waivers, as well as priority consideration for Department-support of proposals for alternate teacher evaluation models. To achieve Exemplary status, districts must meet a majority of goals for overall achievement and narrowing achievement gaps. In Need of Improvement Districts fail to meet the majority of targets for both achievement and achievement gap closure, and are included on a public list. Leaders are required to meet in-person with the Department to create an aggressive plan to meet their goals in the coming year. In Need of Subgroup Improvement Districts may successfully attain their goals in achievement, achievement gap closure, or even both, while experiencing declines among particular groups of students. These districts must focus efforts on ensuring all groups of students show improvement the following year.

**Tennessee’s waiver provides a more flexible, state-specific approach to accountability that recognizes Tennessee’s own plan to improve public education.** Tennessee Department of Education oversight, targeted resources to districts, and more rigorous standards maintain the momentum for education reform. The waiver sustains the focus on improving achievement for all students while narrowing achievement gaps and freeing districts from the laudable but unrealistic expectations of NCLB. As implementation of the new accountability system continues, it will be important for the state department and districts to monitor its successes and challenges in improving education outcomes for all students.

**First to the Top Oversight and Support**

In order to ensure the state effectively implements its First to the Top priorities at both the state and district levels, Tennessee has made several key changes over the last year to the structures and supports it has in place to evaluate and support its initiatives. These changes have included enhancing the feedback the state receives on its implementation progress, revamping the state’s project management process, and enhancing the partner meetings that the Tennessee Department of Education has with individual districts around their scopes of work.

To provide continued oversight and guidance to the state’s First to the Top work, the Department re-engaged the First to the Top Advisory Council, a group of 21 stakeholders – including directors of schools, principals, higher education faculty, and political and business leaders – who are charged with helping the state effectively implement, evaluate, and learn from its work. This group, which has been in place since the state’s Race to the Top grant was awarded and was restructured in the Fall of 2012 under the state’s new leadership, meets twice a year and assists the Department in brainstorming solutions to implementation challenges.

With regard to project management, the Department’s First to the Top office revamped the goals and timelines for all of the projects funded through the Race to the Top grant in early 2012. The intention of these changes was to establish clear goals and metrics for each project to be able to assess its progress against the intended outcomes, as opposed to a checklist of activities. All of the projects now have clear project plans that are used to guide monthly check-ins with all project managers. The Tennessee Consor-

tium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TN CRED) continues to provide long-term evaluation of different components of the state’s work as informed by the Department.

Half of Tennessee’s Race to the Top funding is distributed to local districts to support their scopes of work. The other half is being used to support statewide reform activities. The chart on page 39 provides an overview of the state’s projects by priority area and total budget. The chart to the left illustrates the breakdown of the state’s First to the Top projects by priority area and overall budget. At the local level, districts are required to submit and revise scopes of work for their portion of Race to the Top money, which is awarded according to the federal Title I formula. Districts have the authority to craft their own plans, which must be approved by the Department in order for them to receive funding. While the range of activities proposed in each district’s scope of work varies greatly, professional development, personnel, and technology have been the top expenditures across districts during the first two years of the grant. As of Fall 2012, 11 districts have expended their entire award, and 18 districts have less than \$50,000 remaining.

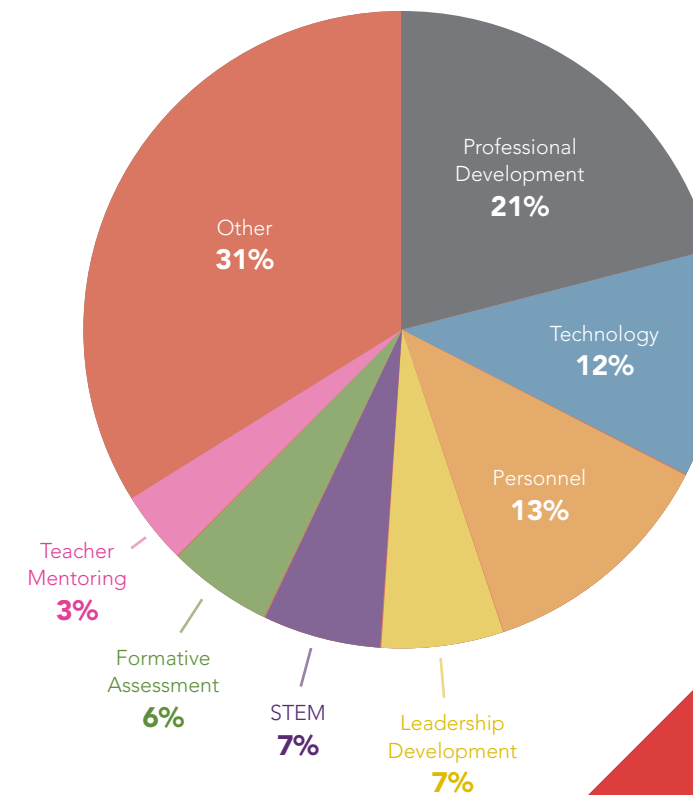
As Tennessee moves into the third year of implementation of First to the Top, the changes to the oversight and feedback structures have increased the involvement of educators in the work and have continued a department-wide transformation from compliance to support in improving student achievement – two significant accomplishments. **As the Department moves forward, a challenge will be ensuring that districts have adequate and ongoing support in meeting local performance goals, especially as local Race to the Top funding allocations are fully expended.**





### Scope of Work Planned Expenditures: Years One and Two

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, 2012. Note: these percentages are self-reported by districts and represent an estimation.



## From the Field: Communication

Throughout SCORE's interviews and focus groups with educators, communication was highlighted as a crucial component to successful implementation of reform initiatives. From the state's extensive efforts to gather feedback on the new teacher evaluation system to calling on educators to provide feedback on the implementation of Common Core standards in grades K-2, educators consistently said they felt like they were part of shaping the state's work. **When asked what advice he would give to the state as it continues implementation, one principal simply said, "Keep listening to practitioners." Not only has this increased buy-in among local educators, it has also given the Tennessee Department of Education a clear look into how different policies are unfolding in districts and schools which enables them to make adjustments to their strategies as needed.**

While educators highlighted the fact that communication between the state department and local educators has improved, it was evident that there were varying levels of clarity across groups. Many teachers said they feel disconnected from the state's current communications. As one teacher said, "We just know change is coming. I think a lot of times, teachers feel like they don't have a voice in what's going to happen." Teachers also highlighted the desire to be communicated with directly. "A lot of times, messages that are important to the state are lost at the county level, lost at the principal level," one teacher said. Similarly, many educators said it was difficult to understand the big picture of First to the Top implementation. "It isn't always clear on the ground how all of the pieces fit together," a higher education faculty member said. "I would appreciate a better idea of the big picture and how we're contributing to the common goal." Conversely, many principals said they felt like some pieces of the work, particularly the transition to PARCC assessments, were not being communicated clearly and that all of the changes occurring in the state have made the updates feel like nothing more than "white noise" at times.





## **Section II:** Education Priorities



# Progress to Date

In its 2011-12 annual report, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) highlighted several key areas as priorities for the state to focus on in improving education: sustained policy leadership, robust professional learning for educators, strengthening teacher preparation programs, and enhancing the principal pipeline. There was substantial progress in many areas, but much work remains to be done to ensure that Tennessee's education reform agenda is implemented consistently and leads to improved student outcomes.

After several years of important reforms in public education, policy leaders in 2012 focused on the critical task of implementation. With the new educator evaluation system in place across the state, educators from all districts, the Tennessee Department of Education, SCORE, the Governor's office, and legislators collaborated to ensure that the system was being implemented effectively and that results were helping drive improvements in student achievement. Although the various stakeholder groups all played important roles in the implementation process, it could not have been successful without the dedication and hard work of the educators responsible for carrying out the new system. Additionally, the Department and SCORE spent significant time gathering input and feedback from educators across the state on the system, which ultimately informed the recommendations made to the State Board of Education.

The conversation regarding the transition to Common Core standards has been collaborative and productive, focusing on effective implementation. The Expect More, Achieve More Coalition, re-launched in September 2012, represents a statewide alliance of more than 150 business, community, and education organizations in Tennessee that is helping to communicate the importance of having high academic stan-

dards in public education. The Coalition is working to build statewide and local engagement, support, and awareness of the state's efforts to raise the bar in the classroom so that every student graduates high school prepared for postsecondary and the workforce. Furthermore, the state's plan for implementation of math Common Core standards in grades 3-8 was much improved over last year's process for K-2. The Department developed a strong plan, utilizing Tennessee educators through the Common Core Leadership Council and Core Coaches, to help train and communicate with fellow teachers and leaders. Much of the success of this year's Common Core implementation stemmed from the robust professional development provided by Tennessee educators. The Department already has a plan in place for 2013 training, and will offer opportunities for K-2 teachers to receive training again – recognizing that their initial training was not sufficient for successful implementation of the standards.

The state also took a systemic approach to improving teacher preparation last year. Collaboration between K-12 and higher education has played a key role in creating opportunities for teacher candidates to receive training on the student growth data (TVAAS), Common Core State Standards, and the new educator evaluation system. Addition-

ally, teacher preparation programs, including traditional university programs and alternative providers, came together to share their best practices in areas that can be a challenge for the field as a whole. However, preparation programs have a responsibility to ensure that their graduates are prepared to be effective educators. The state has a responsibility to work with preparation programs to ensure faculty receive the assistance and training that they need to prepare candidates to meet expectations.

While there has been success in implementing the new educator evaluation system, there is still a pressing need to provide meaningful professional development opportunities that are linked with evaluation results. Currently, the connection between the two is dependent on the quality of school and district leadership and their ability to meet the needs of educators. However, there is still much work to be done on improving the leadership pipeline and supporting current leaders. Strong school and district leaders provide the backbone for important reform efforts to succeed, so it is critical that the state continue to push on plans to enhance and align leadership standards, training, support, and evaluation.





# Priorities Moving Forward

While Tennessee has made significant progress on the education priorities set last year, there is still work to be done in many of these areas. Sustaining policy leadership must continue to be a priority in 2013 to ensure that reforms are implemented successfully and drive improvements in student learning. In addition, since we know that both teachers and leaders play a critical role in raising student achievement outcomes, it is imperative that the state continue to focus on initiatives that will support educators.

There are two additional priority areas that present key issues for the state to focus on moving forward. First, stakeholders across the state must address the need to better integrate technology in the classroom to enhance learning for all students. Second, it is important that parents are empowered with the information and resources they need to help their children succeed, particularly as the state raises the bar in the classroom through higher academic standards.

## 2013 Education Priorities

Sustained Policy Leadership

Foster Great Teaching

Support School and District Leadership

Use Technology to Enhance Learning

Empower Parents

### Sustained Policy Leadership

Tennessee has made significant reforms in education over the past several years, reforms that have led to important early gains in student achievement. As the work has shifted from policy development to implementation, the state must remain committed to ensuring reforms are implemented with fidelity. Members of the Tennessee General Assembly, Department of Education, Board of Education, Higher Education Commission, Expect More, Achieve More Coalition, district and business leaders, educators, SCORE, and others all have important roles to play in the following areas:

- *Continue implementation and support of the important reforms that are underway.* Sustaining policy leadership will entail remaining focused on the reforms to which the state has already committed. To ensure that the early improvements in student achievement are maintained and accelerated, it will be important to resist the impulse to become distracted by new initiatives or slow down the work already underway.
- *Maintain support for the new teacher evaluation system.* It is important that policy leaders maintain their support for a rigorous teacher evaluation system based on multiple measures, including both student achievement and observations of classroom practice. A recommendation was proposed to allow the highest performing teachers to make student achievement data count for the entirety of their evaluation score; this undermines the purpose of the evaluation to look at performance across multiple measures. While we must continue to evaluate how implementation of the system is impacting student achievement and make adjustments when necessary, we should not let concerns regarding administrative burdens diminish the ability of the system to help educators evaluate both student achievement outcomes and teacher practice.
- *Ensure the new accountability system established through the NCLB waiver is leading to positive results for students.* With the state's approved waiver from the requirements of No Child Left Behind, schools and districts have been working to meet the new accountability standards. Under this alternative accountability system, the state is able to recognize the schools and districts that are making gains in student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, while targeting interventions and resources toward schools that are struggling to meet these goals. As with any accountability system, there might be aspects of the system that distract educators from focusing on improving outcomes for all students. As this new system continues to be implemented, it will be important for the Department to establish an intentional feedback process to hear from educators about what parameters of the system drive student achievement gains and which ones make achieving that goal more difficult.
- *Focus on Common Core implementation, training for educators, and preparing for PARCC assessments.* Tennessee has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that all students graduate high school prepared for college and career through the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010. These new standards are clear and demanding and will help Tennessee students compete in the global economy. The Department should continue to support educators as they implement Common Core standards by providing on-going, job-embedded training opportunities. The transition will present challenges for educators and students alike, which is why it is critical that community partners and policymakers engage in the campaign to promote the importance of high academic standards. Furthermore, the move to computer-based assessments with PARCC will require a thoughtful, well-informed strategy to develop the technological capacity across schools and districts.

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Teachers and leaders play a critical role in improving student achievement, and it is imperative that the state continue to focus on initiatives that will support educators.  
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### Foster Great Teaching

Research shows that great teaching is the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement. Tennessee has made significant commitments to raise the bar for what effective teaching looks like in the classroom, recruit teachers who can rise to these expectations, and support current teachers by providing them with meaningful and ongoing feedback about their performance that helps them build on strengths and address their areas for development. In order for Tennessee to accelerate the progress it has seen in improving student achievement outcomes, more work must be done to ensure effective candidates graduate from the state’s teacher preparation programs, support current teachers in their development, and develop strategies to retain great teachers.

#### The Department and State Board of Education

- Continue to play an active role in connecting educators with high quality professional learning opportunities and use the Centers of Regional Excellence in delivering and tailoring professional development to the individual needs of schools and districts.
- Enhance the Electronic Learning Center so that the resources and training materials are accessible, easy to share, and useful for educators. This may include reorganizing the site and improving communication about the resources offered.
- Enlist a statewide recruiter to bring talented educators into Tennessee schools. The UTeach program, which is in place at four campuses in Tennessee, actively recruits undergraduate math and science majors into teaching and has had significant success in increasing the number of candidates training to teach in STEM fields. There needs to be a recruitment strategy to bring high quality candidates into the teaching profession throughout the state.
- Ensure that the process for teacher licensing is rigorous and that renewal is based, at least in part, on performance as measured by student achievement outcomes and evaluation results.

#### Teacher Training Programs

- Strengthen the admissions and recruitment process to actively seek high quality candidates. From the Tennessee Report Card on Teacher Training Programs, we know that many of the public institutions in the state are admitting and graduating candidates with less than a 15 on the ACT. While ACT scores should not be the sole indicator of higher admissions standards, there should at least be a minimum standard that future teachers must meet.
- Ensure that all graduates have an understanding of the new evaluation system, the Common Core standards, and how to use data to enhance instruction.

#### Districts

- Use the results from the new evaluation system to support teacher growth by providing job-embedded, ongoing professional learning opportunities to support teachers.
- Use funds strategically to recruit, support, and retain the best teachers. In 2010, the First to the Top act enabled local boards to apply to the commissioner of education to create salary plans that deviate from the state model in order to attract and retain effective teachers. As an example, Metro Nashville responded to the law by raising its beginning teacher pay from less than \$35,000 to \$40,000, making their beginning teacher pool more competitive.
- Expand student access to effective teachers. Research has found that the problem of retaining teachers is not simply a failure to retain enough teachers – it is the failure to retain the most effective teachers. For example, Memphis City Schools prioritized the staffing of its Innovation Zone schools to ensure that the best teachers were hired early.



Video Clip from  
Covington

## Covington High School

(Tipton County Schools)

### Fostering Great Teaching

Great teaching takes many forms, but most educators agree that growing students no matter where they start from is an unshakable sign of a strong teacher. At Covington High School, great teaching is a cornerstone of the school’s “no excuses” philosophy. And when it comes to student academic growth, Covington has no equal across the state.

The impact that a school or teacher has on student learning gains can be measured using a statistical method known as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). In 2011-12, Covington High School had the highest overall TVAAS growth in the state in Algebra I, posting a score of 50.7, indicating that students are learning much faster and scoring much higher than predicted. The man behind these gains is “Coach” Marlon Heaston, a fifth-year teacher who graduated from Covington High School himself. Heaston describes what great teaching means to him: “Any educator can teach, but great educators are able to create a culturally responsive classroom to improve student achievement. Regardless of the students’ starting points, they will give you 100 percent effort in the classroom if they know the teacher genuinely cares about their education.”

Access to effective teachers is a right every student deserves. Covington High School has put forth aggressive efforts to recruit, support, and retain the best. There is a school-wide strategy to recruit graduates like Heaston to come back and teach. By recruiting from “within the family,” Covington aims to secure teachers who are more invested in the school, and, by extension, the success of their students. As part of a Teacher Incentive Fund-winning district, the school is also in a unique position to reward excellent teachers and ensure that the highest-performing teachers have another reason to stay. The Teacher Incentive Fund (also known as the TIF grant) supports alternative compensation models and performance pay initiatives.

In many ways, rewarding the best educators is simply an extension of a school culture that values self-improvement for all. Last year, the school improvement committee focused on how to engage African American males, who comprise a major portion of the student body. The committee decided to convene a book study among faculty members as a way to generate strategies around connecting to this specific subgroup of students. In addition, self-improvement does not stop with the last class period. After-school tutoring is now available every day of the week for specific subjects. The sessions are all conducted by dedicated Covington staff who go the extra mile to ensure their students have the support they need. Lastly, teachers make special efforts to know their students. This means communicating with students’ families as well. The Parent Portal, which allows access to grades and student data, is one way Covington teachers keep parents in the loop about their children’s progress.

Covington High School stands as an exemplar for promising practices in excellent teaching. Guided by a “no excuses” culture that holds high expectations for everyone in the building, Covington demonstrates that investing in the teacher is indeed one of the most effective strategies to raise student achievement.



# John Sevier Elementary

(Maryville City Schools)

## School Leadership Team

Ask any teacher at John Sevier to describe their school's philosophy, and you'll hear the same refrain: "It begins and ends with relationships." At John Sevier, effective leadership stems from the premise that strong relationships build strong schools. "Teachers and families are really connected at John Sevier," third grade teacher Nicole Keller said. "That's what makes John Sevier so special." Here, there is no one hero in the building. When it comes to creating a supportive learning environment, teachers, students, parents, and administrators are all encouraged to be leaders.

Principal Rick Wilson is revered among faculty for empowering his teachers to take leadership positions from the first year they enter the school. Wilson does not manage from a distance, nor does he keep the day-to-day knowledge about the school to himself. On the contrary, he "spreads the knowledge" by assigning all teachers to administrative teams that are involved in decision-making around school operations. These teams focus on specific issues like building maintenance and school improvement, as well as new teacher hiring. Wilson values his faculty's input throughout John Sevier's rigorous teacher recruitment process. "When you treat everybody like professionals, they feel empowered," he said.

Teachers are given ample autonomy in the classroom as well. If a teacher identifies a certain skill or instructional material he or she would like to use, Wilson does everything he can to accommodate the request. He doesn't micromanage, but rather lets teachers decide the shape that learning will take in the classroom. This results in some rather dynamic practices. In Geoff Hamm's second grade class, for example, students can be seen at the front of the room leading the morning's discussion of vocabulary, challenging peers to provide synonyms, antonyms, and definitions. Again, it comes back to trusting the teachers to be leaders in their students' learning. One teacher affirmed: "What allows us to do that with children is part of Maryville's vision. They give a lot of control to teachers to say, 'We're going to give you what you need in order to get your job done.' And having an administrator like Rick allows us to do that. [He] doesn't say, 'You have to follow this script or this program.' It's very empowering for us."

Strong leaders have the greatest impact when they are visible to the people they lead. Mr. Wilson and Assistant Principal Ginny Boles are common sights in the classroom, dropping in for quick, informal observations. These visits help to build a sense of trust with the teachers, so that Wilson and Boles can better understand their strengths and feel confident suggesting improvements when they are struggling. One teacher explained a time that Wilson pulled her aside to offer advice after visiting her class. He worked with her to bring ActiVote handheld devices into the classroom, enabling her to poll students throughout lessons to assess learning progress. This kind of support is a resounding point of pride among John Sevier faculty. Classroom visits also help Wilson and Boles understand the unique needs of every child—supporting John Sevier's mission to "teach to the child."

It is clear that to be a teacher at John Sevier, a willingness to lead in the classroom and the building drives every effort to raise student achievement. It is also clear that the principal and assistant principal will provide teachers with supports they need to rise to this challenge.

Video Clip from  
John Sevier



## Support Effective School Leadership

Tennessee has committed to significant reforms to transform public education, creating higher expectations for school leaders. Principals have a tremendous role in recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers, providing feedback on instruction to enhance teachers' strengths and improve teachers' weaknesses, and providing the school-level structures and supports that enable teachers to improve student achievement. Part of this work must involve a renewed focus on improving and implementing the principal evaluation system. As Tennessee has begun implementing various reforms, including the new teacher evaluation system and Common Core standards, the importance of having a team of strong instructional leaders in every school has risen to the forefront.

The state has created a strategic plan that provides a strong framework for improving the effectiveness of school leaders across the state and ensuring that there is a pipeline of talented individuals ready to take on leadership roles. This revised approach to instructional leadership focuses on strengthening leadership at all phases of an educator's career and expands school leadership beyond that of the principal. This shift is intended to change the statewide conversation and practice of school-level leadership from one focused on building management to one focused on instructional leadership through a distributed model that relies on a team of strong leaders. Although the state's leadership strategy is poised to make substantial improvements in school-level leadership, not enough has been done and this area remains one of high priority in Tennessee.

### Districts

- Continue to leverage the resources of the Centers of Regional Excellence to ensure that current principals have access to the resources and supports they need.
- Develop clear opportunities for teachers to serve in leadership roles and build strong leadership teams at the school level that include teacher leaders.
- Establish opportunities for principals and instructional supervisors to form professional learning communities with their colleagues in other schools and districts to learn from one another and share best practices.

### School Leader Preparation Programs

- Establish a rigorous selection process and curriculum requirements that prioritize the skills and knowledge instructional leaders need.
- Work with districts to identify and recruit candidates for the school leader preparation programs.

### The Department and State Board of Education

- Develop and execute a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure that schools and districts understand the new instructional leadership standards and the changes that will be made to align training, support, and evaluation.
- Ensure that the principal evaluation system is meaningful and aligned with the revised Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS).
- Ensure that the process for licensing is rigorous and that renewal is based, at least in part, on performance as measured by student achievement outcomes and evaluation results.
- Develop a streamlined administrator licensing system with fewer, but more meaningful endorsements, including one for Teacher Leaders.



## Use Technology to Enhance Learning

Throughout the country, the use of technology for educational purposes is on the rise. More students than ever before are taking courses online or being exposed to blended learning experiences that infuse traditional instruction with digital components. In Tennessee, access to these technologies is informing teachers' instructional practices and providing students with additional avenues for learning outside of the classroom. As the state moves to computer-based assessments with the PARCC examinations, and toward integration of online learning models, there is a need for a thoughtful, well-informed strategy to develop the technological capacity across schools and districts. Many districts may struggle to meet the requirements of the PARCC assessments without a major investment in technology.

### The Department of Education

- Communicate with districts and clarify responsibilities regarding infrastructure development and specific technology needs in preparation of online assessments. As a member of the PARCC Governing Board, Tennessee must continue to exercise strong leadership in guiding the development of a next generation of assessments.
- Use the Centers of Regional Excellence to share best practices and facilitate training on how to use technology to enhance instruction.

### Districts

- Ensure strategic investment in technology to meet specific needs of schools within the district. Too often, technology is not used comprehensively in the classroom as a means to improve and enhance instruction. However, with the right training and resources, teachers can learn how to incorporate technology in new and innovative ways.
- Leverage current technology to expand student access to rigorous coursework and effective teachers. The Niswonger Foundation has helped 15 districts in the northeastern region of the state engage in this work through the Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium (NETCO). The Consortium brings college and career counselors to the schools, in addition to higher level coursework provided through dual enrollment, distance and online learning, and Advanced Placement opportunities.
- Understand district responsibilities for implementing PARCC; specifically in terms of devices, networks, and technical support.

### Business Community

- Work with districts to determine technology needs and financial capacity.
- Help raise funds for strategic investment in technology.
- Lend expertise to help districts make the best use of technology to enhance education.

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**There is a need for a thoughtful, well-informed strategy to develop the technological capacity across schools and districts.** ”





# Hamblen County Schools

## *Technology in the Classroom*

Hamblen County Schools, a rural, high-poverty district in East Tennessee serving a population that includes 12 percent English-language learners, has not let demographic challenges stand in the way of success, even as expectations for education have risen statewide. “The rules of the game have changed in education in Tennessee and across our country,” Superintendent Dr. Dale Lynch said, “and I’m proud of the fact that we can say in Hamblen County our students and our teachers have risen to meet those expectations.” While great teaching, strong leadership, and concerted efforts to increase student access to rigorous courses have all contributed to Hamblen’s inspiring achievement gains, the district’s forward-thinking integration of technology also stands out as a driver of student learning.

The most prominent evidence of Hamblen’s technology focus can be found in the classroom. Take for example Manley Elementary’s audio/video enhancement room, funded with Race to the Top money. Here, Stephanie Dallmann’s English Language Learner students can be observed grappling with different tasks aligned to the Common Core State Standards, already in place at Manley a year ahead of the state department’s schedule. The 360-degree camera fixed to the ceiling and voice amplifier attached to Ms. Dallmann’s neck pipe the lesson through a live stream to Principal Debbie Dickenson’s office. Not only does this provide an opportunity for principals to review teacher performance and make informed recommendations for improvement, it also serves as a professional development tool for the entire district: all recordings are archived in the system, and exemplary lessons are posted on the district website for teachers and administrators to view.

As a member of the Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium, Hamblen County has taken full advantage of the opportunities to expand students’ access to rigorous coursework and effective teachers through the use of distance-learning technologies. The distance-learning classroom at Morristown-Hamblen High School East, for example, uses video-conferencing software to live-broadcast its German classes to a classroom of students enrolled remotely at Greeneville High School. In return Morristown East receives Latin classes from another Northeast Tennessee high school. Morristown West High School receives Physics instruction for its students via distance learning from the University of Tennessee, and will share AP Economics with the consortium in the spring. Additionally, East and West use distance-learning classrooms for ACT prep classes with one school providing the math teacher and the other school providing the English teacher. “It started with raising expectations for our middle school students,” Dr. Lynch said. “And now, it’s enabled us to provide more opportunities.” And that means more students get access to the rigorous courses they deserve.

Hamblen has demonstrated a diversified approach to funding technology infrastructure through additional grant procurement. The new STEM Center at Morristown East was made possible by the state’s Qualified School Construction Bond (QSCB), which funds infrastructure expansion in schools. Dr. Robert Gant, science teacher and resident STEM expert, explains that the new infrastructure at Morristown East has opened doors for all students—providing those interested in accelerated science courses with the opportunity to work on real-world, grant-funded projects in addition to capturing the interest of those students who are typically intimidated by science. Bio-energy and bio-fuels research, reverse engineering of a model rocket, and growing algae for human food product are just a few of the dynamic opportunities available to students. Dr. Gant explains that “the essence of learning” is in allowing students to “find an outlet for rigor that drives them with an internal motivation, a desire to reach out and use this knowledge, and a context which they themselves could never have envisioned before they stepped in the classroom.”

The results are hard to ignore. In just five years, Hamblen County has gone from offering five AP classes to nearly 20—such that AP enrollments now account for 39 percent of all high school course enrollments. It’s no surprise, then, that Hamblen has earned the status of AP honor district based on the increase in AP test takers and average score, one of only four such districts in the state. It is clear that the visionary leadership of central office staff and their innovative prioritizing of technology have played a significant role in vaulting Hamblen County Schools to the top of the 2012 SCORE Prize competition.

Video Clip from  
Hamblen County







## Empower Parents

While it is important to focus on improving school-based factors that impact student learning, it is also essential to empower parents with the resources and supports they need to help their children succeed. Research has shown that family engagement in education, in particular having high expectations for children, can lead to improvements in academic achievement.<sup>23</sup> With students spending roughly two-thirds of their time outside of school, it is critical that parents facilitate and reinforce learning at home. Parent engagement in schools must be meaningful and beneficial for both the families and the schools. Both parties need to have frequent and substantive communication regarding student learning.

### Parents

- Set high expectations for children, encourage children to take challenging coursework, establish a home environment that fosters learning, and support children with homework and other academic pursuits.
- Establish relationships with children's teachers and work together to help children be successful in the classroom. Parents, students, and teachers should review student achievement data and projections regarding future performance to better understand children's strengths and weaknesses.

### Districts and Schools

- Include parents in school and district decision making processes and work with the community to develop parent leaders and representatives.
- Engage families in sharing data and setting goals for students. Schools and districts not only need to share student data with parents, but also must ensure that parents understand how to interpret and use the results to support their students. The state department of education and districts must work together to find ways to return student data to the public in a more timely fashion. Parents need access to data as soon as possible so that they can be engaged in meaningful conversations about their child's education.
- Provide parents with important and timely information about their child's education. This practice has contributed to the success of the 2012 SCORE Prize winning middle school, Rose Park Math and Science Magnet. At Rose Park, all parents receive a copy of their child's benchmarking scores, and administrators make sure that parents are aware of the different tutoring opportunities available. The idea is that better-informed parents can better support their children in order to maximize the effectiveness of the school's interventions.

### The Expect More, Achieve More Coalition

- Continue advocacy efforts for Common Core standards and educating community members. As schools and districts across the state transition to the new, more rigorous Common Core standards and aligned assessments, it is imperative that families are armed with the right information to help their children succeed.

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**It is important to empower parents with the resources and supports they need to help their children succeed, particularly as the state raises the bar in the classroom through higher academic standards.**

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# Rose Park Math and Science Magnet (MNPS)

## *Empowering Parents*

Rose Park Math and Science Magnet's teachers know that empowering students goes hand in hand with empowering parents. Cicely Woodard, eighth grade math teacher, sums up the school's parent outreach strategy as a means to understanding the unique needs of every child. "Knowing where our kids are and being aware of them, not only academically, but socially—with their peers, with their home life—when you have all of that information, it gives you more power to relate to that child," she said.

As an open-lottery magnet, Rose Park takes students from all academic achievement levels from across Metro Nashville. What this translates to in the classroom is high expectations that students will grow regardless of their starting points. Family outreach and community engagement are indispensable components of this mission. The school conducts literacy training for parents through after-school events every other month that focus on strategies for how parents can help their children. Staff provides book suggestions and help parents hone computer skills so they can access resources on their own. "Our focus from the beginning was to increase the literacy level of our students by increasing the literacy level of our parents," Assistant Principal Jackie Freeman said. School administrators also engage in important conversations with parents to review student data. All parents get a copy of their child's benchmarking scores, and administrators make sure that parents know about the tutoring programs their children are placed in. The idea is that better-informed parents can better support their kids in order to maximize the effectiveness of the school's interventions.

Rose Park also benefits from a committed Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO), led by a cadre of strong leaders themselves. Unlike other schools, Rose Park charges no membership dues for its PTSO. Alexis Lewis, PTSO president, affirms that all parents are members by default. The challenge, of course, is connecting disengaged parents to their children's learning. This is why the PTSO hosts special events like Science Night, when students bring their parents to school and show off the projects they've been working on. "We bring parents, kids, and teachers together to ensure that we are on the same page," Lewis said. "Parents and their children, in essence, are learning together."

Reaching immigrant families is of particular concern to administrators. The number of immigrant families has continued to grow and language barriers present significant obstacles to their engagement. The PTSO therefore makes special efforts to connect with these parents. When they're not holding student-parent gatherings, Lewis and her cohort of devoted parents can be seen in the pick-up line after school, brandishing fliers for future events and recruiting new members to the PTSO. "We are guided by the belief that every parent matters and their opinions are important," she said. "That's why we constantly look for ways to connect and communicate with all of our parents."

Rose Park's culture is characterized by a welcoming atmosphere where parents and students alike feel like valued members of the community. By holding its students to high expectations and empowering parents to take part in their learning, Rose Park demonstrates that building a strong school is not only about creating rigorous classrooms, but also forging relationships with the community. The supportive instructional environment and inclusive relationship with parents make Rose Park an inspiring place to be a student.

Video Clip from  
Rose Park





**Section III:**  
SCORE Card





# 2012 District Data

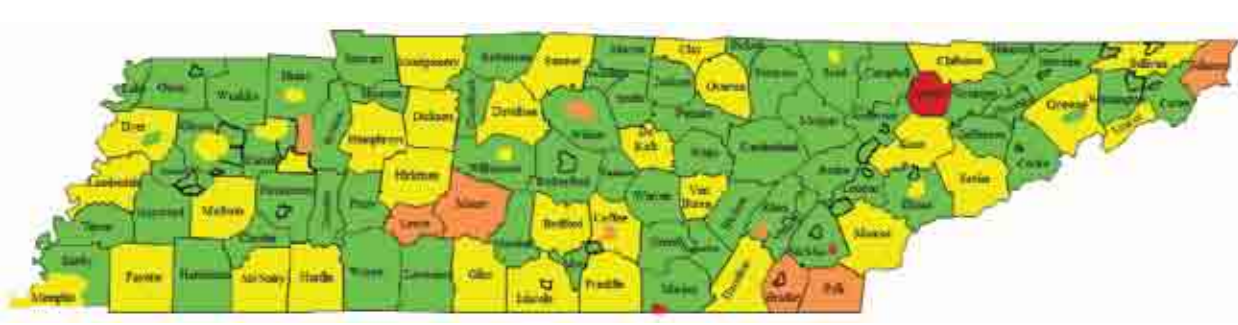
Students across Tennessee have made significant progress on state assessments. However, it is also important that we examine the results of each district to help identify areas of success as well as challenges. For instance, some districts may be seeing improvements only in specific subjects or grade levels. As a state, we must ensure that students across all subjects and grades are making gains. The maps below illustrate the difference between student achievement gains in reading and math across the state. As you can see, the majority of districts have had more success in improving math scores than they have had with reading.

With continued dedication and high expectations of the state’s teachers, administrators, and community members, Tennessee will continue to see gains for students each year. This year’s district results are inspiring, but also reflect the need to continue with Common Core implementation, high expectations for all students, and more rigorous college-readiness efforts across the state.

Gains in Reading Achievement



Gains in Math Achievement



- Green: Significant positive growth
- Yellow: Positive growth
- Orange: Little to no growth
- Red: Negative growth
- Purple: Significant negative growth

Note: Gains in reading and math achievement are based on TVAAS data from the 2012 State Report Card provided by the Tennessee Department of Education. The colors on the map correspond to the state’s A-F grading system.





## SCORE Card Indicators

### District Characteristics

**Number of schools** – This is the number of schools operating in each district for the current school year, as reported on the Tennessee School Directory of Public Schools.

**Total students** – This is the total count of students enrolled in each individual school district as of October 1, according to the Tennessee State Report Card.

**Percent White Students/Percent non-White Students** – This is the percentage of white and non-white (African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American) students in each district according to the Tennessee State Report Card. For the 2011-12 school year Tennessee had 67.8 percent white students, 23.6 percent African American students, 6.6 percent Hispanic students, 1.8 percent Asian students, and 0.2 percent Native American students.

**Low Income Students** – This is the percentage of students in a district identified as being on free or reduced price lunch on the Tennessee State Report Card. In the 2011-12 school year, 58.6 percent of students in Tennessee were labeled as low income or economically disadvantaged.

### Inputs

**Per Pupil Spending** – This is the total per pupil spending in each district (state, local, federal) as calculated on the Tennessee State Report Card. Expenditures per student provide a comparison among school systems of different sizes.

**Percent Local Funding** – This is the percent of all district funding that comes from local revenue sources.

### Tennessee Assessments

**Math or Reading Proficiency** – This is the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on TCAP math and reading assessments in grades 3-8.. For the 2011-12 school year, 52 percent of students in Tennessee scored proficient or advanced in math and 50 percent scored proficient or advanced in reading in grades 3-8

**Math or Reading TVAAS** – This is the three year average of third through eighth grade TVAAS scores as reported on the Tennessee State Report Card in both reading and math.

### High School Success

**ACT Average** – This is the three year average ACT composite score as reported on the Tennessee State Report Card. The ACT is mandatory statewide and assesses student' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. Tennessee's three-year average score was 18.9 out of a possible 36.

**College Readiness** – This is the percentage of students in each district who met ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks across all four subject areas in 2011. The benchmarks represent a student's chance of earning a passing grade in college level courses.

**Graduation Rate** – This is the percentage of students in each district who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of the 2011-12 school year as reported on the Tennessee State Report Card. The graduation rate calculation is based on the US Department of Education 4-year adjusted cohort formula, which measures the number of students who graduate within four years, accounting for transfers and summer school terms. For the 2011-12 school year, Tennessee's graduation rate was 87.2 percent.

**The following pages present in depth student achievement data for each district in Tennessee.**

**Descriptions of each metric measured in the report are provided, and more information about individual measures may be found in the glossary.**



District	District Characteristics					Inputs	
	Number of Schools	Total Students	% White Students	% Non-White Students	% Low Income Students	Per Pupil Spending	% Local Funding
Alamo	1	589	74%	26%	66%	8,395.00	11%
Alcoa	3	1,740	73%	27%	50%	10,444.00	53%
Anderson County	16	6,597	98%	3%	63%	9,234.00	37%
Athens	5	1,460	77%	23%	66%	9,721.00	33%
Bedford County	14	7,893	72%	28%	64%	7,858.00	21%
Bells	1	379	58%	42%	72%	8,539.00	12%
Benton County	8	2,202	94%	7%	66%	9,744.00	30%
Bledsoe County	5	1,736	93%	7%	80%	9,383.00	15%
Blount County	21	10,585	95%	5%	51%	8,701.00	38%
Bradford	2	531	93%	7%	57%	9,732.00	23%
Bradley County	17	9,918	93%	7%	56%	7,889.00	31%
Bristol	7	3,781	92%	8%	52%	9,670.00	50%
Campbell County	13	5,490	99%	1%	75%	8,110.00	21%
Cannon County	7	2,000	96%	4%	66%	8,190.00	19%
Carroll County	2	6	60%	40%	63%	N/A	52%
Carter County	16	5,365	97%	3%	72%	9,009.00	24%
Cheatham County	13	6,599	95%	5%	49%	7,774.00	26%
Chester County	6	2,729	83%	17%	57%	7,404.00	15%
Claiborne County	13	4,495	98%	2%	72%	8,924.00	24%
Clay County	5	1,021	96%	4%	70%	9,615.00	19%
Cleveland	8	5,009	71%	29%	62%	9,079.00	36%
Clinton	3	875	94%	6%	60%	9,495.00	40%
Cocke County	12	4,617	94%	6%	79%	8,837.00	22%
Coffee County	9	4,256	93%	7%	61%	8,970.00	36%
Crockett County	5	1,813	73%	27%	65%	8,085.00	15%
Cumberland County	12	6,999	94%	6%	66%	8,024.00	30%
Davidson County	143	74,680	34%	67%	72%	11,012.00	56%
Dayton	1	789	82%	18%	64%	7,883.00	20%
Decatur County	4	1,585	91%	9%	57%	8,522.00	23%
DeKalb County	6	2,885	89%	11%	64%	7,882.00	20%
Dickson County	15	8,209	89%	11%	54%	8,260.00	33%
Dyer County	8	3,634	90%	10%	65%	8,385.00	34%
Dyersburg	4	2,804	55%	46%	72%	9,672.00	33%
Elizabethton	5	2,296	94%	6%	51%	9,182.00	35%
Etowah	1	328	92%	8%	75%	9,471.00	24%
Fayette County	10	3,440	37%	63%	75%	9,720.00	31%
Fayetteville	3	1,157	68%	32%	61%	8,935.00	29%
Fentress County	6	2,255	98%	2%	71%	8,576.00	20%
Franklin County	11	5,500	90%	10%	59%	8,700.00	32%
Franklin SSD	8	3,601	61%	39%	42%	12,466.00	67%

Tennessee Assessments				High School Success		
Math Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Math TVAAS	Reading TVAAS	ACT Average	Graduation Rate	College Readiness
68%	67%	5.4	2.3	N/A	N/A	N/A
49%	55%	2.1	1.1	22.0	97%	35.5%
47%	48%	3.6	0.3	18.8	93%	9.7%
60%	54%	3.9	0.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
44%	48%	0.9	-0.7	18.7	91%	11.0%
50%	48%	8.2	4.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
49%	48%	2.5	-0.7	19.4	91%	10.8%
44%	38%	2.9	-1.3	18.4	81%	8.9%
50%	51%	3.0	0.1	19.3	91%	11.1%
62%	56%	3.9	-1.2	18.7	100%	2.1%
47%	53%	0.4	-1.1	18.8	94%	9.5%
57%	56%	0.9	-0.3	21.1	91%	18.8%
38%	40%	1.8	-0.6	17.7	82%	7.1%
40%	44%	2.5	0.2	18.1	89%	6.4%
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
38%	45%	2.1	-0.9	17.8	90%	7.1%
48%	49%	2.4	-0.2	19.4	92%	13.7%
54%	49%	2.5	-0.2	19.2	96%	12.1%
41%	46%	1.7	0.0	18.2	91%	4.7%
38%	37%	0.8	-2.3	18.5	96%	6.6%
43%	47%	-0.1	-1.1	20.3	82%	20.2%
60%	60%	5.2	2.8	N/A	N/A	N/A
56%	47%	3.2	-1.1	18.2	94%	8.5%
39%	45%	1.1	-1.7	19.2	93%	14.9%
39%	43%	2.8	-0.7	18.8	90%	11.6%
55%	56%	4.4	1.3	19.2	93%	10.5%
39%	41%	1.4	0.0	18.2	78%	10.1%
53%	56%	-0.4	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
49%	44%	3.9	-1.3	18.9	84%	8.5%
42%	49%	1.3	0.8	18.4	94%	5.5%
55%	58%	1.0	-0.3	19.4	90%	10.8%
53%	48%	1.7	0.4	19.7	99%	17.0%
46%	43%	3.6	0.0	20.4	93%	23.3%
52%	54%	2.1	0.0	19.8	96%	21.3%
22%	43%	-1.1	0.3	N/A	N/A	N/A
30%	33%	0.6	-1.5	16.3	84%	3.9%
47%	55%	0.9	-1.6	N/A	N/A	N/A
41%	46%	2.0	-0.6	18.0	98%	9.7%
45%	50%	1.1	-0.7	18.7	91%	14.2%
69%	70%	1.2	-0.3	N/A	N/A	



District	District Characteristics					Inputs	
	Number of Schools	Total Students	% White Students	% Non-White Students	% Low Income Students	Per Pupil Spending	% Local Funding
Gibson Co Sp Dist	9	3,684	91%	9%	44%	6,836.00	27%
Giles County	8	3,941	84%	17%	61%	9,517.00	33%
Grainger County	9	3,466	95%	5%	67%	8,015.00	16%
Greene County	16	6,987	96%	4%	67%	7,811.00	24%
Greeneville	7	2,627	87%	14%	43%	10,356.00	43%
Grundy County	8	2,142	99%	1%	82%	9,394.00	14%
H Rock Bruceton	2	675	90%	10%	70%	7,298.00	23%
Hamblen County	18	9,754	77%	23%	62%	7,870.00	39%
Hamilton County	77	41,214	59%	41%	56%	9,277.00	52%
Hancock County	2	970	99%	1%	80%	9,822.00	10%
Hardeman County	9	3,829	45%	55%	79%	9,874.00	22%
Hardin County	7	3,499	92%	8%	66%	9,375.00	35%
Hawkins County	18	7,243	96%	4%	67%	8,826.00	30%
Haywood County	6	3,164	31%	69%	78%	9,133.00	22%
Henderson County	9	3,660	90%	10%	63%	8,328.00	24%
Henry County	6	3,017	91%	9%	60%	9,215.00	34%
Hickman County	8	3,582	95%	5%	60%	8,941.00	18%
Houston County	5	1,319	93%	7%	58%	8,641.00	16%
Humboldt	4	1,147	22%	79%	85%	10,410.00	22%
Humphreys County	7	2,849	95%	6%	59%	8,632.00	23%
Huntingdon	3	1,212	82%	18%	53%	7,494.00	25%
Jackson County	4	1,472	99%	2%	72%	8,715.00	18%
Jefferson County	11	7,157	92%	8%	65%	8,052.00	27%
Johnson City	11	7,341	79%	21%	49%	9,347.00	51%
Johnson County	7	2,103	98%	2%	72%	10,118.00	23%
Kingsport	13	6,485	86%	14%	50%	10,194.00	53%
Knox County	87	55,160	78%	22%	47%	8,479.00	53%
Lake County	3	856	70%	30%	75%	10,050.00	17%
Lauderdale County	7	4,404	55%	45%	77%	8,722.00	16%
Lawrence County	13	6,516	95%	5%	61%	8,152.00	22%
Lebanon	6	3,293	71%	29%	62%	8,399.00	44%
Lenoir City	3	2,173	77%	24%	63%	9,062.00	47%
Lewis County	4	1,833	95%	5%	63%	7,724.00	17%
Lexington	2	963	72%	28%	55%	9,316.00	28%
Lincoln County	8	3,855	92%	8%	55%	7,936.00	25%
Loudon County	9	4,848	87%	13%	56%	8,222.00	44%
Macon County	8	3,628	93%	7%	62%	8,029.00	17%
Madison County	27	12,382	34%	66%	77%	9,813.00	44%
Manchester	3	1,326	81%	20%	64%	10,373.00	43%

Tennessee Assessments				High School Success		
Math Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Math TVAAS	Reading TVAAS	ACT Average	Graduation Rate	College Readiness
61%	61%	2.9	0.3	18.7	93%	6.8%
34%	45%	1.7	0.9	18.3	89%	8.3%
42%	43%	2.3	-0.6	17.8	92%	5.4%
42%	45%	1.0	-0.6	18.7	94%	11.1%
56%	62%	3.5	0.6	22.1	97%	38.2%
33%	37%	2.2	0.5	17.4	90%	4.6%
41%	40%	-0.1	-2.4	17.4	99%	4.9%
49%	50%	3.2	0.2	19.5	87%	16.9%
50%	46%	1.7	-0.6	18.7	81%	11.7%
33%	32%	3.6	-1.8	16.6	75%	3.7%
37%	39%	1.8	-1.1	17.0	82%	2.3%
43%	49%	0.7	0.0	19.0	85%	6.7%
45%	48%	2.2	-0.6	18.4	95%	8.0%
33%	35%	2.5	-0.3	17.5	85%	10.2%
61%	54%	3.8	-0.2	19.1	94%	7.7%
58%	52%	3.8	0.0	19.0	89%	11.6%
47%	49%	0.7	-1.5	17.9	91%	3.7%
44%	44%	2.5	-0.2	18.3	94%	10.6%
46%	34%	5.3	0.3	16.2	80%	5.7%
48%	54%	0.7	-0.1	19.1	90%	7.4%
56%	51%	4.0	0.8	19.5	96%	10.9%
39%	41%	1.9	-1.0	17.6	90%	7.8%
42%	45%	2.6	0.3	18.4	92%	7.8%
70%	68%	3.5	0.7	22.1	92%	28.3%
49%	51%	-0.4	-1.7	17.9	93%	7.1%
65%	61%	3.2	1.0	22.0	90%	30.7%
52%	57%	1.7	0.3	20.5	90%	19.2%
33%	29%	3.3	-0.1	18.1	84%	20.5%
32%	38%	1.0	-0.3	17.6	93%	3.5%
59%	58%	2.5	-0.3	19.0	96%	8.1%
42%	51%	0.1	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
46%	43%	2.6	-0.3	19.2	91%	11.7%
43%	47%	-0.2	-1.3	18.2	84%	7.2%
59%	60%	2.5	0.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
45%	61%	1.0	0.5	18.7	93%	9.3%
52%	56%	3.4	1.4	18.3	92%	6.7%
41%	45%	2.8	-0.2	18.8	85%	5.6%
36%	39%	0.6	-1.6	17.9	95%	6.6%
41%	51%	0.3	-1.0	N/A	N/A	N/A



District	District Characteristics					Inputs	
	Number of Schools	Total Students	% White Students	% Non-White Students	% Low Income Students	Per Pupil Spending	% Local Funding
Marion County	10	4,176	94%	7%	72%	8,078.00	28%
Marshall County	9	5,168	85%	15%	58%	8,432.00	30%
Maryville	7	4,847	91%	9%	32%	9,477.00	54%
Maury County	20	11,281	73%	27%	57%	8,612.00	36%
McKenzie	3	1,377	83%	17%	58%	7,248.00	22%
McMinn County	9	5,835	91%	9%	61%	7,972.00	28%
McNairy County	8	4,205	91%	9%	65%	8,241.00	20%
Meigs County	4	1,681	98%	2%	68%	8,413.00	16%
Memphis	212	101,696	7%	93%	85%	11,250.00	39%
Milan	3	2,050	73%	27%	59%	8,427.00	27%
Monroe County	13	5,387	93%	7%	67%	8,478.00	26%
Montgomery County	36	29,126	61%	39%	47%	8,639.00	33%
Moore County	2	989	96%	4%	54%	8,950.00	32%
Morgan County	8	3,126	99%	1%	65%	8,649.00	14%
Murfreesboro	11	6,985	60%	40%	53%	9,191.00	41%
Newport	1	700	89%	11%	56%	9,583.00	25%
Oak Ridge	7	4,365	74%	26%	46%	12,380.00	53%
Obion County	7	3,593	91%	9%	60%	8,409.00	30%
Oneida	3	1,221	99%	1%	65%	8,397.00	20%
Overton County	9	3,263	99%	1%	61%	7,916.00	17%
Paris	3	1,635	75%	25%	61%	8,229.00	34%
Perry County	4	1,087	94%	6%	73%	9,350.00	20%
Pickett County	2	722	98%	2%	60%	8,340.00	20%
Polk County	6	2,526	98%	3%	71%	8,258.00	22%
Putnam County	21	10,179	85%	15%	56%	8,332.00	35%
Rhea County	6	4,158	92%	8%	72%	8,243.00	25%
Richard City	1	339	96%	4%	69%	8,109.00	28%
Roane County	17	6,970	94%	6%	55%	8,883.00	49%
Robertson County	19	10,916	81%	19%	51%	8,157.00	29%
Rogersville	1	673	95%	5%	45%	8,448.00	33%
Rutherford County	46	38,118	70%	31%	44%	8,098.00	38%
Scott County	7	2,837	99%	1%	85%	8,388.00	15%
Sequatchie County	3	2,142	94%	6%	68%	7,685.00	24%
Sevier County	27	14,021	91%	9%	62%	9,103.00	59%
Shelby County	52	45,050	52%	48%	39%	9,318.00	42%
Smith County	10	3,097	93%	7%	59%	7,948.00	21%
South Carroll	1	348	95%	5%	54%	8,535.00	24%
Stewart County	5	2,099	96%	4%	55%	9,628.00	19%
Sullivan County	25	10,620	98%	2%	54%	9,181.00	43%
Sumner County	46	27,203	84%	16%	40%	7,947.00	36%

Tennessee Assessments				High School Success		
Math Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Math TVAAS	Reading TVAAS	ACT Average	Graduation Rate	College Readiness
42%	46%	2.4	-0.4	18.5	84%	7.9%
44%	50%	3.0	-0.8	18.7	92%	10.0%
63%	72%	1.3	0.6	23.8	92%	48.1%
39%	49%	0.3	0.0	19.0	87%	10.3%
57%	58%	1.2	-0.3	19.6	95%	15.5%
49%	47%	3.7	0.2	18.3	92%	8.7%
50%	51%	1.0	-0.4	18.7	93%	8.6%
55%	52%	3.5	0.2	18.7	94%	9.2%
28%	29%	0.8	-1.1	16.4	70%	4.0%
57%	47%	4.4	-0.2	20.0	98%	14.4%
38%	44%	0.7	-0.7	18.0	95%	5.6%
50%	55%	1.0	0.0	19.2	95%	12.3%
57%	44%	3.1	-0.8	18.4	89%	10.8%
34%	41%	2.0	-0.6	17.8	99%	4.4%
59%	60%	3.2	1.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
65%	63%	4.4	1.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
60%	63%	1.9	0.3	23.1	94%	41.3%
51%	53%	2.0	-0.1	18.7	91%	11.2%
38%	53%	1.1	0.2	18.6	92%	14.5%
48%	49%	1.2	-0.8	18.2	89%	6.1%
57%	51%	0.7	-0.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
49%	49%	2.7	-0.9	18.2	93%	1.6%
30%	48%	2.0	0.5	18.5	96%	2.2%
41%	42%	1.7	-0.2	18.1	92%	9.9%
52%	54%	1.9	-0.5	20.4	91%	17.4%
49%	48%	2.6	-1.0	18.2	82%	9.5%
24%	47%	-1.0	-1.8	17.9	88%	8.3%
45%	49%	2.0	-0.8	19.4	89%	12.0%
51%	51%	2.5	-0.2	18.8	95%	6.9%
61%	71%	2.9	2.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
58%	61%	2.2	0.8	19.8	91%	15.3%
38%	45%	1.9	-0.1	17.3	88%	6.3%
46%	46%	2.4	0.3	18.3	94%	6.9%
43%	49%	0.8	-0.5	19.7	86%	16.7%
57%	61%	1.8	-0.2	20.8	91%	20.4%
51%	54%	2.6	0.1	18.9	93%	11.0%
47%	58%	1.0	-0.5	18.9	93%	3.7%
62%	56%	3.9	1.3	18.5	99%	9.3%
52%	54%	0.8	-0.9	19.9	94%	15.5%
53%	58%	0.8	-0.6	20.3	91%	16.0%



District	District Characteristics					Inputs	
	Number of Schools	Total Students	% White Students	% Non-White Students	% Low Income Students	Per Pupil Spending	% Local Funding
Sweetwater	4	1,493	86%	14%	71%	8,172.00	23%
Tipton County	14	11,437	73%	27%	55%	7,922.00	20%
Trenton	3	1,318	68%	32%	64%	8,329.00	26%
Trousdale County	3	1,235	84%	16%	59%	8,259.00	17%
Tullahoma	7	3,187	87%	13%	51%	10,237.00	47%
Unicoi County	7	2,534	91%	10%	61%	8,371.00	22%
Union City	3	1,445	50%	50%	71%	9,187.00	34%
Union County	9	4,534	94%	6%	69%	7,276.00	13%
Van Buren County	2	728	99%	1%	63%	9,283.00	19%
Warren County	11	6,362	82%	18%	66%	8,348.00	24%
Washington County	16	8,929	95%	5%	48%	8,148.00	42%
Wayne County	8	2,312	97%	3%	69%	8,899.00	14%
Weakley County	11	4,461	89%	11%	60%	8,000.00	22%
West Carroll Sp Dist	3	961	87%	13%	66%	8,342.00	23%
White County	9	3,857	95%	5%	64%	7,736.00	18%
Williamson County	41	31,686	88%	12%	12%	8,436.00	56%
Wilson County	21	15,408	87%	13%	29%	7,803.00	42%

Tennessee Assessments				High School Success		
Math Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Math TVAAS	Reading TVAAS	ACT Average	Graduation Rate	College Readiness
53%	49%	3.1	-0.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
51%	52%	3.1	0.0	20.1	96%	14.7%
47%	47%	1.0	-0.1	18.9	97%	13.0%
59%	48%	6.0	-0.7	19.4	95%	19.6%
49%	51%	3.2	0.0	21.0	87%	18.7%
45%	54%	1.4	-0.2	19.0	97%	7.6%
51%	47%	3.4	0.1	19.8	76%	11.0%
21%	37%	-1.5	-1.5	17.9	81%	7.1%
23%	43%	0.9	-1.1	18.0	86%	2.1%
39%	47%	1.9	0.3	18.2	92%	10.2%
55%	55%	2.5	0.4	19.6	94%	12.3%
42%	45%	2.6	-0.2	18.5	94%	7.5%
53%	59%	2.2	1.1	20.0	92%	17.5%
38%	51%	4.1	0.9	18.0	99%	4.1%
57%	52%	2.4	-0.4	18.3	94%	5.4%
75%	82%	1.9	1.9	22.9	92%	34.4%
58%	62%	2.6	1.3	19.8	96%	12.9%

“There was substantial progress in 2012, but much work remains to be done to ensure that Tennessee’s education reform agenda is implemented consistently and leads to improved student outcomes.”



# Glossary





**ACT** – The ACT is a standardized assessment for high school students frequently required for admission into college. The test has sections in English, mathematics, reading, science reasoning, and an optional written essay. Scored on a scale from 1 to 36, the test is intended to be an indicator of college readiness. The subjects align with common college introductory courses. All 11<sup>th</sup> graders in Tennessee are required to take this exam.

**ACT College Readiness Benchmarks** – The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum exam scores determined by ACT, Inc. to signal a student’s preparedness to succeed in first-year, credit-bearing courses at a postsecondary institution. An English score of 18 and a reading score of 21 indicate a student would have a high probability of success in an English composition or social sciences course. Similarly, a math score of 22 and a science score of 24 illustrate a similarly high potential of success in a college algebra or biology class.

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** – Adequate yearly progress is a measure established by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that holds schools accountable for the performance of their students on standardized tests, including sub-groups such as racial/ethnic minorities and students with disabilities. Tennessee has received a waiver from No Child Left Behind’s AYP-based accountability model and developed its own system of accountability. As a result of the waiver, AYP is no longer used in Tennessee.

**Advanced Placement (AP)** – Advanced Placement courses are courses offered by the College Board that provide students with an opportunity to take college-level courses and earn credit towards college while in high school. There are

more than 30 different AP courses across multiple subject areas.

**Alternative Salary Schedule** – Alternative salary schedules tie a teacher’s compensation and incentives to professional learning, student achievement, and other measures. They contrast traditional salary schedules, which uniformly increase the pay of teachers based on number of years teaching and level of degree completion.

**Basic Education Program (BEP)** – The state of Tennessee determines how to allocate funds to its K-12 schools with the Basic Education Program (BEP) formula. The BEP formula calculates the cost of providing a basic education. The BEP includes three major categories of expenditures: instructional, classroom, and non-classroom components. Within the BEP formula, the primary basis for funding is student enrollment, or average daily membership (ADM). The majority of the BEP’s 45 components are based on a school or district’s ADM. Examples include students per teacher, assistant principals per school, and dollars per student for textbooks. Systems are free to raise additional money to support their schools as well.

**Career and Technical Education (CTE)** – Also known as vocational education, career and technical education refers to courses and programs designed to prepare students to enter the workforce. Usually in a secondary or postsecondary setting, CTE courses focus on academic and vocational skills needed in the workplace and typically include competency-based learning. CTE seeks to prepare trainees for jobs in fields such as agriculture, engineering, and health care.

**Charter School** – Charter schools are public schools that are operated by independent, non-profit governing bodies, which include parent

members.<sup>24</sup> As public schools, they are tuition-free, funded by public dollars, and held to the same academic standards as other public schools in Tennessee. While they must meet those standards, the main difference between public charters and traditional schools is that charters have more control over their budgets, staff, curricula, and operations.

**Collaborative Conferencing** – Collaborative conferencing is the process of bringing together school boards and teachers—after a vote to proceed by a majority of teachers in a district—to confer on the conditions and terms of teacher contracts. Tennessee adopted collaborative conferencing in place of collective bargaining with the passage of the Professional Educators Collaborative Conferencing Act (PECCA) of 2011.

**Dual Credit** – Dual credit courses are high school courses taught by high school faculty that are aligned with the curriculum of a postsecondary course. Students taking a dual credit course can receive postsecondary credit if they have satisfactory performance on an end-of-course assessment designed by the postsecondary institution.

**Dual Enrollment** – Dual enrollment is a postsecondary course taught at either the postsecondary institution or high school that allows students to simultaneously earn postsecondary and secondary course credit upon successful completion of the course.

**Early Warning Data System (EWDS)** – Early Warning Data Systems provide teachers, schools, districts, and states with a set of dashboards to help monitor student performance and outcomes. Tennessee’s EWDS will provide users with a set of dashboards with longitudinal reports on students, classes, schools, districts, and the entire

state. Using research-based risk indicators, these reports identify students to whom targeted intervention strategies can be delivered. The EWDS also incorporates the state’s requirements and helps to align learning plans and interventions.

**Electronic Learning Center** – The Electronic Learning Center is an online learning portal for educators and administrators. It provides online professional development, including resources from conferences, content aligned podcasts, trainings on Common Core standards and technology, and other information that can be accessed at any time.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** – The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is a federal education law originally enacted in 1965 to provide funding for low income and underserved students. In 2001, ESEA was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act, which ties the allocation of federal funds to the ability of schools and districts to demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” by key sub-groups of students historically underperforming on achievement measures. See also No Child Left Behind.

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)** – Also known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” NAEP is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics in the subject areas of mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history. Exams are administered every two years to representative samples of students in grades 4, 8, and 12, and provide common metrics to indicate levels of student proficiency across states and selected urban districts.

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB)** – The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is the current version of the El-

ementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that established an accountability framework for all public schools based on student achievement on standardized tests. The law stipulates that all students, including historically underachieving groups of students, such as minorities and students with disabilities, must make a certain amount of progress each year, also known as “adequately yearly progress,” in order to receive federal funds. See also Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

**No Child Left Behind Waiver** – In order to provide states with flexibility for No Child Left Behind, the U.S. Department of Education began to grant waivers from portions of the law in 2012. Tennessee and other states voluntarily applied for waivers that detailed alternative plans for promoting accountability and student achievement. Approved waivers exempted states from specific NCLB requirements, usually with regard to adequate yearly progress and the 100 percent proficiency standard required by 2014. Instead of continuing to measure AYP, Tennessee will ensure accountability by identifying schools with large achievement gaps or low performance and providing targeted interventions to those schools and districts.

**Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** – The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers is a consortium of states that are working together to develop common, computer-based assessments that are aligned with Common Core State Standards. PARCC is one of two consortia receiving federal grant funds to develop assessments that can inform teachers of student progress periodically throughout the academic year, instead of just at the end of the year. Beginning in 2014-15, PARCC

assessments will replace the TCAP math and reading exams.

**Postsecondary Education** – Postsecondary education refers to colleges, universities, and technical centers that grant certificates, credentials, and degrees beyond a high school diploma.

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)** – STEM is a common acronym for the fields of study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Additionally, STEM education is about incorporating technology in the classroom to enhance learning. STEM is often discussed as an area in need of improvement and growth to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

**State Salary Schedule** – Tennessee’s State Salary Schedule for teachers is a minimum salary amount determined by years of experience teaching and professional degrees earned. A first-year teacher with a bachelor’s degree can earn a minimum \$29,680 according to the salary schedule.

**Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)** – State Longitudinal Data Systems are intended to enhance the ability of states to manage, analyze, and utilize education data by pooling data from K-12 sources or even P-20W (early learning through college and the workforce). The end goal of SLDS is to enable states, districts, schools, educators, and other stakeholders to make data-driven decisions to improve student learning and outcomes. Tennessee received a federal grant in 2006 to develop a longitudinal data system.

**Teaching, Empowering, Learning, and Leading Survey (TELL)** – TELL Tennessee is a statewide survey of educators designed to assess teaching and learning conditions,



including facilities and resources, professional development, school and teacher leadership, and time for collaborative instructional planning. The TELL Tennessee Survey was given in 2011 and will be given again in 2013

**Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL)** – TASL provides professional learning for principals, assistant principals, and instructional supervisors. Participation includes an induction academy for beginning leaders and 28 hours of TASL-approved professional learning within two years.

**Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)** – The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) is a collection

of criterion-referenced achievement tests designed to evaluate the levels of students' proficiency in reading/language arts, math, science and social studies. Among the assessments are the Achievement Test (grades 3-8), the Writing assessment (grades 5, 8, and 11), the End-of-Course tests (grades 9-12), and college readiness exams (grades 8, 10, and 11). Districts may also choose to administer TCAP assessments in selected subjects to students in grades K-2. There are four proficiency levels on the TCAP: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced.

**Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS)** – TVAAS is a measure of the effect a district or school has on the academic prog-

ress or growth rates of individual students and groups of students from year to year. TVAAS scores are based on multiple measures, including TCAP examinations.

**Tenure** – Tenure is a status where employees are hired on a permanent basis without periodic contract renewals. Tennessee law was changed in 2011 to enable districts to grant tenure to teachers after a five-year probationary period if teachers have demonstrated a certain level of effectiveness, based, in part, on student achievement.

“

Whether we succeed or fail in this work over the next few years will have significant implications in the lives of the next generation of Tennesseans. ”



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