



S C O R E
State Collaborative on Reforming Education

2015-16

STATE OF EDUCATION
IN TENNESSEE



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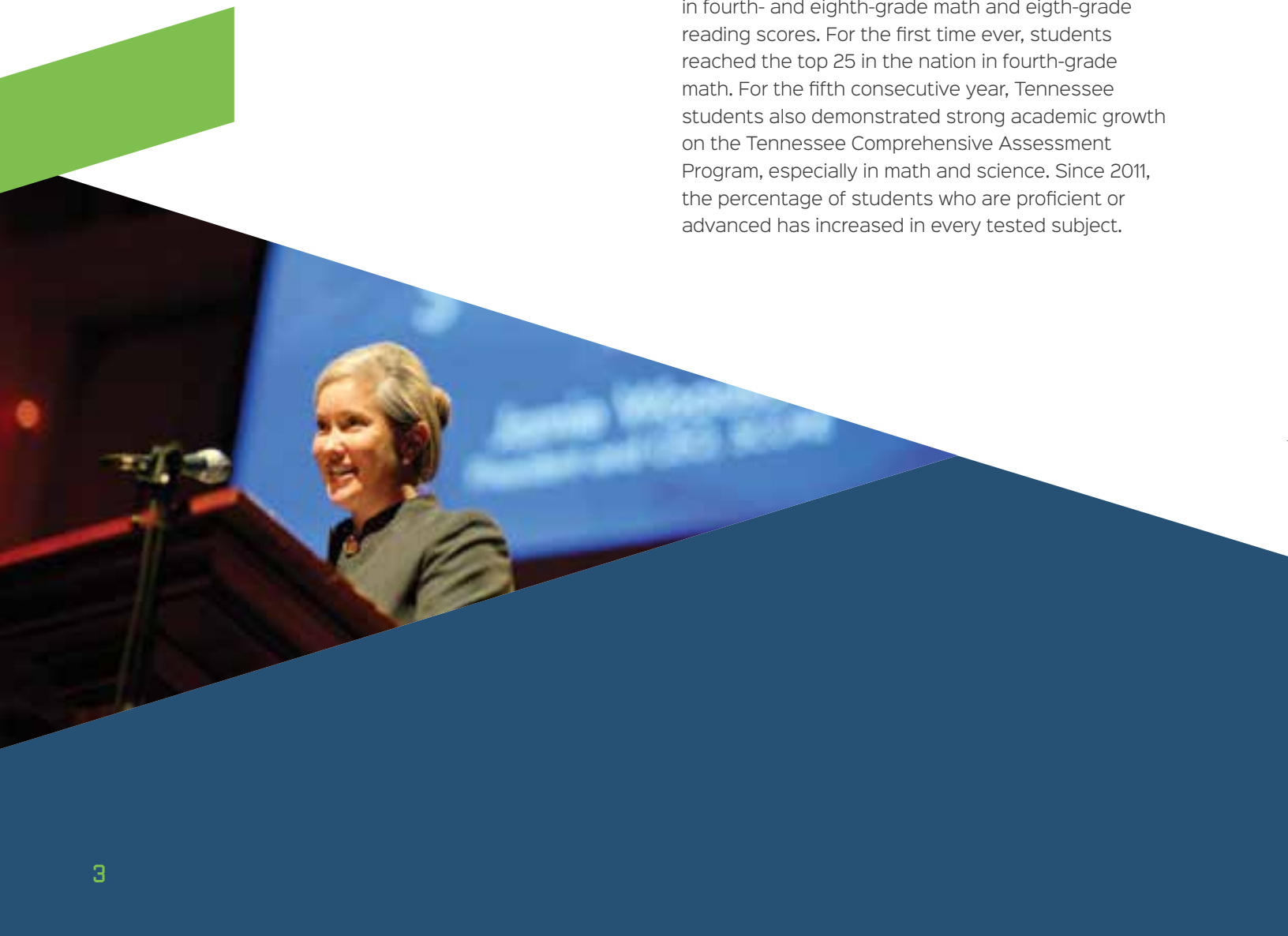
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LETTER FROM SENATOR BILL FRIST AND JAMIE WOODSON

January 27, 2016

Over the last few years, educators, business leaders, policymakers, and community members have come together around the belief that with common goals and an unyielding focus on what is best for students, we can improve the future for our children, the opportunities for our citizens, and the overall success of our state. As we celebrate the tremendous progress Tennessee has made in education, it is also important to look back to identify the work that has led to these positive outcomes and look ahead to determine opportunities for continued growth.

In 2013, Tennessee was the fastest improving state on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the 2015 results confirm that the 2013 gains were real and lasting. In the last year, Tennessee students continued to rise in the rankings in fourth- and eighth-grade math and eighth-grade reading scores. For the first time ever, students reached the top 25 in the nation in fourth-grade math. For the fifth consecutive year, Tennessee students also demonstrated strong academic growth on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, especially in math and science. Since 2011, the percentage of students who are proficient or advanced has increased in every tested subject.



Compared to their peers in neighboring states in which all graduating seniors took the ACT, a higher percentage of Tennessee students scored at college-ready levels in all four subject areas—English, mathematics, reading, and science.

We are proving to the nation that the Tennessee way is working for Tennessee students, and we should continue with this student-focused approach. However, we want to ensure that all students share in the academic success that will lead to a better education, better jobs, and a better future. Rather than be content with the achievements of the last few years, we as a state must recommit to the work that still lies ahead. Too many of our students, particularly in our state's most underserved populations, still lack the basic skills needed to be successful beyond high school.

The *2015-16 State of Education in Tennessee* report provides a comprehensive update on the progress our state has made in the past year and sets priorities for all education stakeholders in the year

ahead. We know that improving student achievement is hard work. However, our students depend on us to get this right, because for them, it's the only chance they will get. We look forward to working with you to move closer to our shared vision of preparing all students for success.

Bill Frist

Julie Woodson





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the U.S. Chamber of Commerce gave Tennessee an “F” for truth in advertising in 2007, the imperative to improve the quality of public education in the state became undeniable. Since then, a series of policies and practices have transformed Tennessee’s education system and led to strong gains for many of our students. Now, Tennessee must embed the reforms of recent years into the daily practices of schools and districts statewide.

Since 2009, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) has published a comprehensive annual report on the state of public education in Tennessee. These reports provide an update on Tennessee’s work to improve student achievement and set education priorities for the coming year.

The *2015-16 State of Education in Tennessee* report reflects insights gained through conversations with teachers, principals, and district leaders across the state. These conversations inform SCORE’s progress monitoring of both successes and challenges faced in schools and classrooms. These partners also provide a clearer picture of the supports needed to continually improve student achievement in Tennessee. SCORE also gathers information through

individual interviews with state and national partners. Finally, SCORE looks to other states and current research to identify evidence-based best practices in education that can drive solutions to persistent problems in Tennessee. In addition to research on policy changes and promising practices, this report reflects information gathered through:

- 40 focus groups with teachers, principals, and district leaders in eight regions across the state
- 9 in-depth interviews with state-level leaders in education
- 4 in-depth interviews with national education partners
- Discussions with SCORE’s Steering Committee, a group of more than 35 policymakers, educators, elected officials, business leaders, parents, and students who advise SCORE’s work





The first portion of this report details updates on policies and programs that have been developed and implemented over the past year. This section is organized into three pillars that guide and organize SCORE's work as an organization:

- **Empowering People:** Every classroom, school, and district must be led by passionate and effective teachers, principals, and district leaders, which requires efforts to better recruit, develop, and retain high-quality talent. These individuals in turn need to feel equipped and empowered to engage in their communities to advocate for what is needed to drive student success.
- **Insisting on High Expectations:** Rigorous standards aligned to quality assessments set the clear expectation that all Tennessee students are capable of a high level of achievement.
- **Fostering a Culture of Innovation:** A culture of innovation extends from the system level through each school and classroom. The policies and resources that govern schools must create an environment where innovation can thrive.

The second part of this report presents priorities for the coming year in education. SCORE has identified these priorities through extensive conversations with educators, community leaders, policymakers, and the members of SCORE's Steering Committee. These priorities are meant to guide the work of all education partners in Tennessee:

- **Implement TNReady and Aligned Interim Assessments.** Ensure students, educators, and district leaders have the support and resources they need to successfully implement TNReady and aligned interim assessments. District assessment systems should protect instructional time while also providing educators with the information they need to support improved student learning. Educators and policymakers should remain committed to full implementation in the coming academic year.
- **Ensure Equitable Outcomes for Historically Underserved Populations.** Develop and implement programs and policies that will yield improved academic



outcomes for students of color and students living in poverty. These policies and programs should narrow and eventually eliminate persistent achievement gaps in Tennessee.

- **Empower Tennessee's Teachers.** Cultivate a culture of teaching in Tennessee that attracts high-quality candidates to the profession and supports the continual growth of Tennessee's current teachers.
- **Invest in Tennessee's School and District Leaders.** Build and expand the leadership pipeline in Tennessee, providing school and district leaders the preparation and support they need to effectively meet the needs of their students and teachers.
- **Cultivate Community and Business Partnerships in Education.** Local communities and businesses should deepen their investment in Tennessee education, providing districts and schools with additional resources and support that will accelerate improved student learning across the state.

Achieving the priorities outlined in this report requires setting, committing to, and providing students and teachers the support they need to meet and exceed high expectations. The efforts underway across the state aimed at keeping Tennessee on its path toward improving student achievement require a shared sense of urgency to implement innovations we know empower students to succeed. Tennessee has made significant progress over the past five years. The test of that progress will come in our commitment to continue leading for the future of all of our state's students. Through collaborative efforts toward common goals, we can accelerate improved student achievement in Tennessee.

2015-16 STATE OF EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE



INTRODUCTION

When the U.S. Chamber of Commerce gave Tennessee an “F” for truth in advertising in 2007, the imperative to improve the quality of public education in the state became undeniable. Since then, changes in policy and practice have transformed Tennessee’s education system. Now, Tennessee must embed reforms of recent years into the practices of schools and districts statewide. This moment presents a compelling opportunity to assess the progress Tennessee has made for our state’s students since 2007 and affirm a vision for continued progress in the years ahead.

The significant student achievement progress made in Tennessee in recent years can be attributed to shared commitment among educators, policymakers, parents, and other partners statewide to promote high-quality teaching, enhance the rigor of academic standards, focus on using data to inform educational decision-making, and provide dedicated, visionary leadership in school buildings and districts. These areas of work must remain ongoing, but further steps are needed to build on the foundation of recent educational gains. Fostering a culture of commitment

to ensuring every Tennessean graduates from high school prepared for success in their postsecondary and working careers requires collective, collaborative action.

Since 2009, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) has published a comprehensive annual report on the state of public education in Tennessee. These reports provide an update on Tennessee’s work to improve student achievement and set education priorities for the coming year, priorities, which are meant to guide the work of all education partners in the state.

The *2015-16 State of Education in Tennessee* report reflects insights gained through conversations with teachers, principals, and district leaders across the state. Every year, SCORE conducts a Listening Tour, hosting focus groups with teachers, principals, and district leaders. These conversations highlight both successes and challenges faced in schools

and classrooms and provide a clearer picture of the supports needed to continually improve student achievement in Tennessee. SCORE also gathers information through individual interviews with state and national partners who provide insight into programs and policies implemented over the past academic year. Finally, SCORE looks to other states and current research to identify evidence-based best practices in education that can drive solutions to persistent problems in Tennessee. In addition to research on policy, legislative changes, and promising practices, this report reflects information gathered through:

- 40 focus groups with teachers, principals, and district leaders in eight regions across the state
- 9 in-depth interviews with state-level leaders in education
- 4 in-depth interviews with national education partners
- Discussions with SCORE's Steering Committee, a group of more than 35 policymakers, educators, elected officials, business leaders, parents, and students who advise SCORE's work

The first portion of this report provides in-depth updates on policies and programs that have been developed and implemented over the past year. This portion of the report is organized into three pillars that guide and organize SCORE's work as an organization:

- **Empowering People:** Every classroom, school, and district must be led by passionate and effective teachers, principals, and district leaders, which requires better recruitment, development, and retention of high-quality talent. These individuals in turn need to feel equipped and empowered to engage in their communities to advocate for what is needed to drive student success.
- **Insisting on High Expectations:** Rigorous standards aligned to quality assessments set the clear expectation that all Tennessee

students are capable of a high level of achievement.

- **Fostering a Culture of Innovation:** A culture of innovation extends from the system level through each school and classroom. The policies and resources that govern schools must create an environment where innovation can thrive. Educators must seek new ideas and embrace successful models wherever they are found.

While these three areas of work do not encompass all of the work that has been done in education across the state, they reflect pillars of work that SCORE prioritizes as an organization and that many education partners have invested in over recent years. These pillars will guide SCORE's work in the years ahead, and this report will provide indicators of success and highlight persistent challenges faced in these areas.

The second part of this report presents priorities for the coming year in education. SCORE has identified these priorities through extensive conversations with educators, community leaders, policymakers, and the SCORE Steering Committee. The annual priorities are meant to guide not only SCORE's work in the coming year, but the work of all education partners in Tennessee. Through collaborative efforts toward common goals, we can accelerate improvement in Tennessee student achievement.



EMPOWERING PEOPLE

Expanding access to high-quality teaching is critical in ensuring all students in Tennessee graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. Research indicates that teachers have a greater impact on student learning than any other in-school factor.¹ In the short term, high-quality teaching has large positive effects on math and reading achievement.² In the long term, students assigned to highly effective teachers are more likely to attend college and earn higher salaries than their peers who experienced lower-quality teaching.³ Every student in Tennessee deserves access to great teaching in every subject and classroom.

After teachers, principals are the most important in-school factor affecting student learning.⁴ Principals influence student achievement directly by holding high expectations for students, maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment, and organizing the school schedule around instructional needs.⁵ They also influence achievement when they make staffing decisions and provide direction and support to teachers. Together, these direct and indirect influences account for up to 25 percent of a school's impact on student learning.⁶

Principals must serve as instructional leaders. In this role, principals work to improve the quality of instruction in their schools by providing teachers with actionable feedback, modeling effective instruction, supporting teacher collaboration, and providing opportunities for professional learning.⁷ Principals who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour reported spending a large portion of time supporting teachers. However, they noted that despite an increased emphasis on instructional leadership, their other duties as administrators, such as student discipline and building maintenance, have not decreased.⁸ In an environment where more is expected of principals than ever before, principals must receive high-quality training and support, both during their initial preparation and through ongoing professional learning opportunities.

District leaders also have become more involved in instruction in recent years. District leaders engage in instructional leadership when they develop district-wide learning goals, engage in instructional planning, visit schools and classrooms to observe instruction, develop instructional policies, and make instructional knowledge a priority in hiring decisions.⁹ District leaders also play an important role in developing principals as instructional leaders. They can do this by modeling instructional leadership, engaging principals in challenging conversations about their practice and ways to improve, along with connecting principals to other principals or central office staff for instructional support.¹⁰

UPDATE ON THE WORK

State-Level Leadership. Over the past year, Tennessee underwent transitions in leadership at the state level. In January 2015, Dr. Candice McQueen was sworn in as Tennessee Commissioner of Education. Commissioner McQueen previously served as Senior Vice President and Dean of the College of Education at Lipscomb University and began her career in education as a classroom teacher. Over the past year, Commissioner McQueen spent time traveling the state and listening to educators about the successes



and challenges they face in their classrooms and schools. She convened task forces to address issues at the forefront of Tennessee's education conversation such as testing, testing logistics, early literacy, and teacher preparation.

The State Board of Education also experienced a leadership transition as Dr. Gary Nixon retired and Dr. Sara Heyburn was appointed Executive Director. Dr. Heyburn most recently served as the Assistant Commissioner of Teachers and Leaders at the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). Dr. Heyburn began her career in education as a teacher in Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky and Williamson County in Tennessee.

In November 2015, Commissioner McQueen and Governor Haslam announced that Malika Anderson, previously Deputy Superintendent at the Achievement School District (ASD), would serve as the new ASD superintendent. Anderson succeeded Chris Barbic upon his departure in December 2015. Anderson has previously served as Chief Schools Portfolio Officer for the ASD and as a Broad Resident with the District of Columbia Public Schools' Office of Academic Analysis and Support.¹¹

Teaching. Passage of the First to the Top Act in 2010 initiated a comprehensive effort in Tennessee to expand access to highly effective teaching throughout the state. This effort included adopting a new educator evaluation system for most school districts in Tennessee, the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM). This comprehensive, student outcomes-based model was among the first of its kind in the nation.¹² Other steps Tennessee has taken to ensure access to effective teaching include offering professional learning opportunities on Tennessee's State Standards; revising the state's Educator Preparation Policy; working to better connect professional learning opportunities, compensation, and tenure to the teacher evaluation system; and partnering with districts to develop innovative teacher leadership models. This section describes the implementation of these policies as well as policy changes that occurred in 2015.

Teacher Preparation. In October 2014, the Tennessee State Board of Education passed a new Educator Preparation Policy. This policy revised the process by which educator preparation programs receive approval from the State Board of Education to train teachers and recommend graduates for Tennessee teacher licenses. Compared to the previous policy, the new policy places greater emphasis on admission requirements, clinical experiences, and the effectiveness of a program's graduates once they enter the classroom.¹³ In 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education convened an Implementation Working Group to provide advice on protocols, tools, and benchmarks for the approval of educator preparation programs. The Implementation Working Group will meet regularly until June 2016. The Tennessee Department of Education then will make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding implementation of the Tennessee Educator Preparation Policy.¹⁴

Since 2010, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has published an annual Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs. The Report Card includes information on degrees earned by preparation program completers; Praxis exam and Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores of completers; and Core Academic Skills for Educators reading, writing, and math assessment scores. Future reports will also include data collected on program completers through TEAM and alternative teacher assessment models. These and other data are useful to a variety of stakeholders:

- **Prospective teachers** can use these data to select a preparation program to attend.
- **Schools and districts** can make more informed hiring decisions.
- **Preparation programs** can examine their areas of strength and weakness so that they know where to focus improvement efforts.
- **State policymakers** can use these data to inform future teacher preparation policies.

The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the TDOE and the Tennessee Higher Education

Commission, is currently in the process of redesigning the Report Card to further improve its usefulness and relevance to stakeholders.¹⁵

Teacher Evaluation. In April 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education released *Teacher and Administrator Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year 3 Implementation*. Data and feedback from the 2013-14 school year informed this report. Compared to previous years, there was a closer correlation between teachers' scores on observations and student growth measures. Schools showing a high degree of misalignment between observation scores and growth measures worked with state coaches over the past year to improve the fidelity of classroom observation scores.

The Tennessee Department of Education continued to expand evaluation options for non-tested grades and subjects by developing portfolio models for middle and high school physical education, lifetime wellness, pre-K and kindergarten, and alternative educators.¹⁶ The State Board of Education approved the Pre-K/Kindergarten Portfolio Model in July 2015.¹⁷ Districts may begin using this optional model in the 2015-16 school year. Because of increased use of portfolio models, approximately 48 percent of teachers received a growth score based on student data from their individual classroom, rather than school-level growth data. If districts used all available growth options, nearly 80 percent of teachers would receive individual growth scores. It is important to encourage and provide support to local school districts to increase their use of new growth options in teacher evaluations.

Finally, more districts chose to implement a state-approved alternative to the TEAM evaluation model. These alternative models contain the same basic components as the TEAM model, but may use a different observation rubric and a different number or length of classroom observations.¹⁸

The Tennessee Department of Education's 2015 Tennessee Educator Survey, which is shared with all teachers in the state, revealed that more teachers than ever before have a favorable opinion of Tennessee's teacher evaluation system. Sixty-eight



percent of teachers agree that the teacher evaluation process has led to improvements in their teaching, and 63 percent agree that it has led to improvements in student learning. However, there remains room for improvement in implementation; 32 percent of teachers still feel that teacher evaluations are not conducted fairly.¹⁹

Participants in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour noted that Tennessee's teacher evaluation system has fostered more meaningful conversations with administrators and has resulted in higher-quality feedback on their teaching. Teachers and administrators also appreciate the specificity of the evaluation rubric used during classroom observations. However, some participants mentioned ongoing challenges with implementation of teacher evaluation. Some administrators feel overwhelmed by the number of evaluations they are required to complete. Others feel the observation rubric is not well suited to certain types of teachers, such as physical education and

special education teachers, or that the rubric contains too many items for teachers to cover in one lesson.

**SIXTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF
TEACHERS AGREE THAT THE
TEACHER EVALUATION PROCESS
HAS LED TO IMPROVEMENTS
IN THEIR TEACHING, AND 63
PERCENT AGREE THAT IT HAS
LED TO IMPROVEMENTS IN
STUDENT LEARNING.**

In addition, some teachers continue to express concerns about the use of student test scores in teacher evaluations, especially for teachers of untested grades and subjects.²⁰

Over recent years, Tennessee has implemented policies and programs aimed at connecting results from teacher evaluations to support for teachers in their daily practice. For example, in Fall 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education launched the Instructional Partnership Initiative (IPI), a program that uses teacher evaluation feedback to provide personalized professional development through collaborative teacher partnerships.²¹ IPI partners teachers who struggle in particular areas of practice with teachers who have demonstrated success in those areas. During a two-year pilot of the program, schools that implemented teacher partnership teams saw their school-wide Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) scores increase in both reading and mathematics compared to comparable schools that did not implement the program. During the 2015-16 school year, approximately half of Tennessee schools have the opportunity to participate in IPI.²²

Legislative Change. During the 2015 legislative session, legislators proposed several changes to Tennessee's teacher evaluation system. Some of these changes would have significantly weakened the system by reducing the number of effectiveness categories for teachers or suspending the use of student outcome data.²³ In the end, the legislature passed a bill presented by Governor Haslam. The bill, known as the Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act, adjusts how TVAAS scores are factored into teacher evaluations during the transition to Tennessee's new assessment, TNReady. In the 2015-16 school year, TVAAS will continue to account for 35 percent of the evaluation score for teachers of tested grades and subjects and will be based on three years of student growth data. However, growth data from the new TNReady assessment will count for only 10 percent of the evaluation. Additionally, teachers may elect to use TNReady to account for 35 percent of the evaluation if they choose. The Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act also reduces the weight on student achievement and growth data for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects from 40 percent to 30 percent.²⁴

Over the next three years, the amount of weight placed on TNReady growth data in teachers' evaluations will gradually increase (*Figures 1-4*).



FIGURE 1. TEACHERS OF TESTED GRADES AND SUBJECTS WITH PRIOR DATA ²⁵

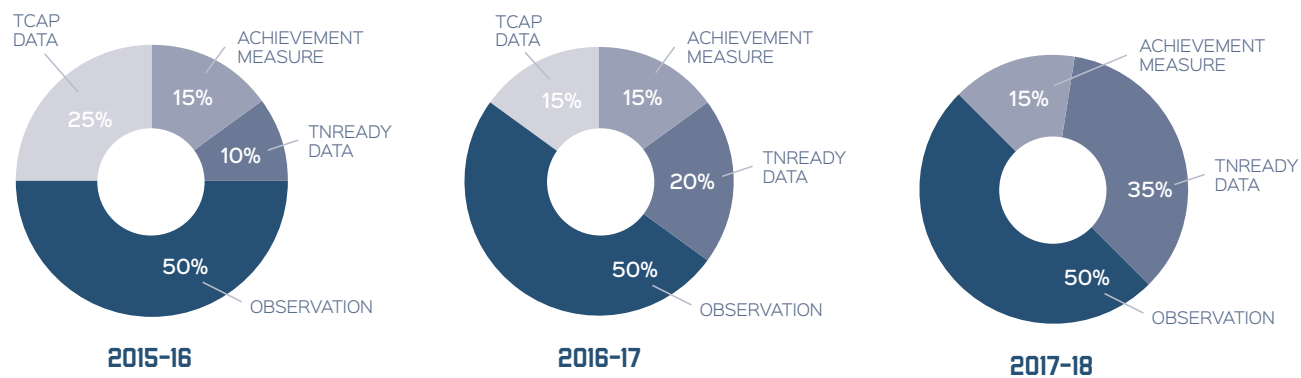


FIGURE 2. TEACHERS OF TESTED GRADES AND SUBJECTS WITHOUT PRIOR DATA ²⁶

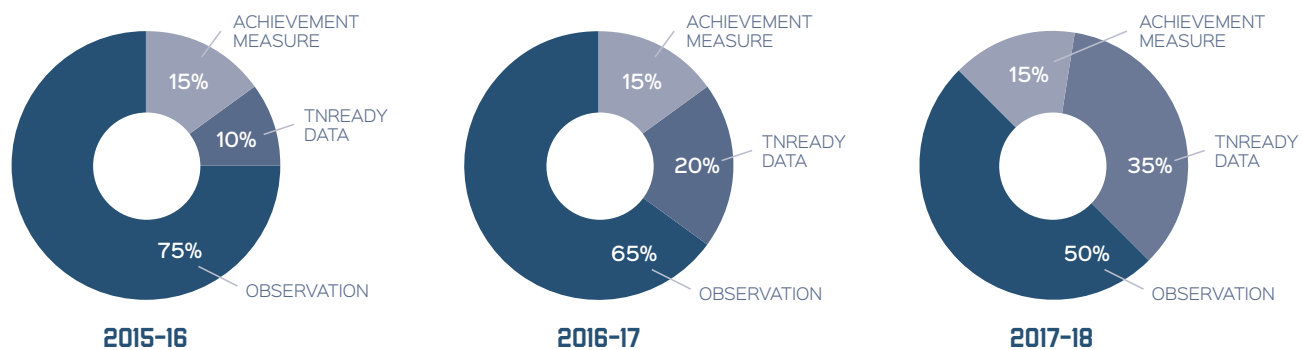


FIGURE 3. TEACHERS OF NON-TESTED GRADES AND SUBJECTS ²⁷

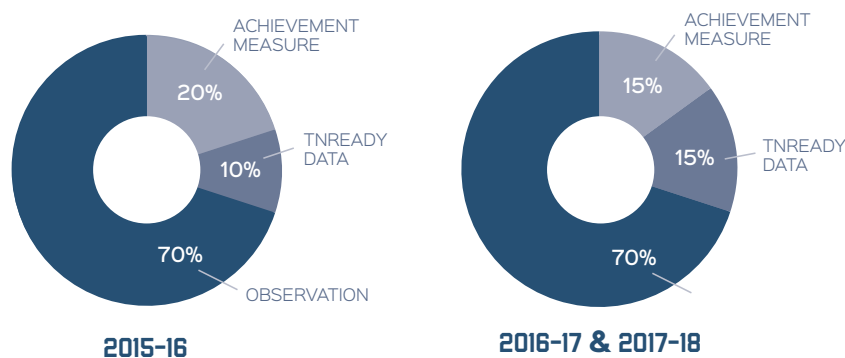
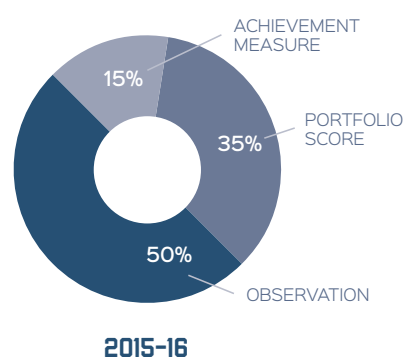


FIGURE 4. NON-TESTED TEACHERS USING A PORTFOLIO GROWTH MODEL ²⁸





Teacher Licensure. In July 2014, the State Board of Education approved a new teacher licensure policy for Tennessee. This new policy went into effect on September 1, 2015, and streamlines educator licensure by replacing apprentice, transitional, out-of-state, and interim licenses with a single license type, the practitioner license. The practitioner license is valid for three years and may be renewed once. After gaining three years of experience, educators with a practitioner license may apply for a professional license. The new policy also allows teachers to use their evaluation scores to earn Professional Development Points toward the advancement or renewal of their license.²⁹

Teacher Leadership. Empowering teachers to become leaders in their schools, districts, and communities is a key lever for improving student achievement. By formalizing specific teacher leadership roles, districts and school administrators can improve the collective effectiveness of their teaching staffs and promote a positive school culture. Establishing leadership pathways also provides an effective way to retain excellent teachers by creating attractive career ladders that do not require a teacher to leave the classroom.

In 2011, the State Board of Education adopted the Teacher Leader Model Standards with the goal of developing strong teacher leadership in Tennessee. Two years later, the Tennessee Department of Education created the Tennessee Teacher Leader

Network to develop teacher leader models for use in diverse districts throughout the state. During the 2014-15 school year, eight districts served on the Tennessee Teacher Leader Network: Cleveland City Schools, Collierville Schools, Gestalt Community Schools, Henderson County Schools, Lauderdale County Schools, Lincoln County Schools, Paris Special School District, and Sumner County Schools.³⁰ These districts formed the second group of schools to work with the Tennessee Department of Education to develop teacher leader models for their districts.

Guided by research on best practices and the Tennessee Teacher Leader Standards, these eight districts worked with the Tennessee Department of Education to develop a teacher leadership model that meets their specific needs. While each district's model is unique, all provide opportunities for teachers to take on additional responsibilities in their school or district without leaving the classroom. Teacher leaders may, for example, coach other teachers, lead professional development sessions, or develop common formative assessments for their district. Teachers receive additional compensation for taking on these extra responsibilities.³¹

In addition to leadership roles in schools or districts, teacher leadership models can create opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles in the policymaking process. Policy leadership focuses on extending the impact of teacher leaders beyond their individual classrooms and schools. These roles create networks of teacher leaders and professional learning communities in order to influence policymaking at district, state, and national levels. In June 2015, Governor Haslam announced the first Governor's Teacher Cabinet. This group of 18 Tennessee teachers meets quarterly with Governor Haslam and Education Commissioner McQueen to share real-time information from the classroom and provide feedback on how policies are implemented in schools across the state. The members of the Teacher Cabinet serve two-year terms.³² The Teacher Cabinet has provided actionable feedback on the recommendations provided by the Tennessee Task Force on Student Testing and Assessment and on communication related to teacher liability insurance, the standards review process, and next steps to follow the Educator Survey.

Teacher fellowships are another avenue for teacher leadership in Tennessee. The SCORE Tennessee Educator Fellowship brings together a diverse group of teachers from across the state to learn about, reflect upon, and inform the policies, practices, and systems that affect student achievement and educator effectiveness. In the 2015-16 school year, there are 26 Tennessee Educator Fellows. Fellows learn the skills necessary to advocate for and participate in public policy discussions around advancing student learning. They receive trainings on communications and advocacy and briefings on policies and best practices. SCORE then works to connect fellows with opportunities to share their voice.

The Hope Street Group, America Achieves, Student Achievement Partners, and Collaborative for Student Success also provide teacher leadership opportunities for Tennessee educators. Similar to SCORE's Tennessee Educator Fellowship, many of these groups aim to amplify teacher voice by providing a diverse group of Tennessee public school teachers with skills in peer and community engagement and communication strategies.³³

Teachers who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour reported taking on a variety of leadership roles, including serving as mentors or instructional coaches, attending state trainings and sharing the information at their school, and developing assessments. However, some teachers felt that their school or district did not offer enough leadership opportunities or that the same few teachers were selected for leadership roles.³⁴

Providing teachers with opportunities to take on leadership roles in their school can improve motivation and retention.³⁵ As Tennessee and Tennessee's local school districts work to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, it is important to expand opportunities for teachers to serve as leaders without leaving the classroom.

School and District Leadership. Tennessee's Learning Centered Leadership Policy, initially adopted in 2008, lays the foundation for high-quality school leadership across the state. The policy includes requirements for principal preparation and licensure and lays out the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS).³⁶ The following sections describe recent policy changes and other new developments in school and district leadership in Tennessee.

Principal Preparation. Researchers and practitioners have long criticized principal preparation programs for being out of touch with the needs of today's administrators.³⁷ Several principals who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour felt this way about the principal preparation programs they attended, noting that their preparation programs never addressed critical aspects of their jobs.³⁸

To address this issue, Tennessee's Learning Centered Leadership Policy provides a framework for high-quality principal preparation. The policy requires preparation programs to form partnerships with local school districts, maintain rigorous admission standards, rely on research-based curricula, and provide meaningful field experiences for all principal candidates.³⁹ However, the policy does not require any follow-up or monitoring of implementation, so the extent to which preparation programs are actually implementing these measures is unclear.

In 2013, Governor Haslam announced the creation of a new school leadership program in partnership with Vanderbilt University, the Tennessee Department of Education, and local school districts.⁴⁰ After two years of planning, the state recruited its first cohort for the Governor's Academy for School Leadership in 2015. The fellows begin their training at Vanderbilt's Peabody College in January 2016. The 12-month program aims to strengthen the principal pipeline by developing beginning assistant principals into highly effective school leaders.⁴¹ In addition, the Tennessee Department of Education has called on the University of Tennessee Knoxville's Leadership Academy to expand its program to districts beyond Knox County.

Beginning in fall 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education convened the Transformational Leadership Advisory Council to inform principal pipeline improvement efforts. The department also plans to create regional transformational hubs across the state. These hubs will create opportunities for principals to collaborate with principals in other schools and districts.

Legislative Change. In 2015, a teacher in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools with a degree in administration from Harvard University was unable to pursue a principal position because she did not receive her administrative degree from a Tennessee-based university. In response, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a bill that prohibits the State Board of Education from denying instructional leader licensure based solely on whether the applicant graduated from a preparation program located in another state.⁴² Under the previous policy, applicants who had not completed an approved in-state master's program had to have at least three years of experience as an administrator in order to receive a Tennessee Instructional Leadership License. In response to the legislation, the State Board of Education amended its licensure policy so that graduates of out-of-state programs do not need to have prior experience as an administrator in order to be licensed in Tennessee.⁴³

Principal Evaluation. During the 2012-13 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education worked with multiple stakeholder groups to revise the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS) to reflect

the changing nature of the principal's role. In 2013-14, ten districts piloted a new administrator evaluation rubric aligned to the revised TILS. These districts provided feedback to the Tennessee Department of Education to further strengthen the rubric, the evaluation process, and accompanying support tools. In 2014-15, the new evaluation rubric was implemented statewide.⁴⁴

Also during the 2014-15 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education provided sixteen regional administrator evaluation coaches (two per CORE region) to support district leaders in their implementation of the new administrator evaluation rubric. Other supports from the Tennessee Department of Education included a teacher perception survey aligned to the administrator evaluation rubric, a site visit tool featuring best practices from districts, and an initiative pairing highly effective principals with struggling principals to form cross-district learning partnerships.⁴⁵

On the 2015 Tennessee Educator Survey, school administrators expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the principal evaluation process. Of the nearly 2,000 administrators who participated in the survey, 81 percent agreed that the administrator evaluation process will lead to improved student learning, compared to 57 percent in 2014. Eighty-seven percent agreed that the evaluation process is fair, and 81 percent indicated that they were satisfied overall with Tennessee's administrator evaluation process.⁴⁶

Many of the principals who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour reported having valuable conversations with their evaluators about how to improve their practice. Using the revised principal evaluation rubric as a guide, evaluators were able to give principals more specific and useful feedback than in previous years. Even so, principals also indicated that district leaders sometimes did not provide them with the feedback and support they need to improve as instructional leaders.⁴⁷

Professional Learning. Throughout 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education offered a variety of professional learning opportunities for school and district leaders. In the spring, school leaders and district instructional staff could attend a Leadership Course focused on Tennessee's new



assessments, writing best practices, instructional tools, and resource supports.⁴⁸ In October, the annual LEAD Conference gave school and district leaders the opportunity to convene and share effective practices.⁴⁹ The Tennessee Department of Education also maintains a website where leaders can find professional learning events in their area that align with the TILS.⁵⁰

The Role of District Leaders. While school leaders provide support to teachers in classrooms, district leaders create the conditions that principals need to successfully lead school improvement. As new policies are passed, significant responsibility falls on district leaders to determine the most effective strategies for implementing policies in their local districts. It is essential for state leaders to support district leaders through policies and programs that allow them to create environments for principals and teachers to operate more effectively.⁵¹

Over the past year, the Tennessee Department of Education convened groups of district leaders to collaborate on designing processes for implementing policies more effectively in their schools. Working groups address teacher leadership models, the implementation of RTI², and the implementation of TNReady. While only a small number of districts participate in these working groups, they often create resources or models for implementation that are available to other districts across the state.

District leaders and central office personnel who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour reported taking a variety of actions to support instruction in their districts. District leaders often directed this support at school principals. Central office staff reported visiting schools to provide principals support with evaluating teachers, providing useful feedback on instruction, analyzing student data, and connecting struggling teachers to needed supports. Central office personnel also supported teachers directly by providing group trainings or one-on-one support with lesson planning, the evaluation rubric, and curriculum implementation.⁵²

INSISTING ON HIGH EXPECTATIONS



Academic standards define what students should know and be able to do by the end of their K-12 education. Academic standards create a roadmap for teachers' instruction and a clear set of expectations for student learning. Standards should inform teacher preparation programs, influence curricula and textbooks, and guide state assessments and accountability systems. For these reasons, high-quality academic standards can lay the foundation for shifts in policy and practice that lead to improved student outcomes.⁵³

The following characteristics are important components of high-quality academic standards:

- **Rigor:** Standards are challenging and emphasize critical thinking and problem solving.
- **Focus:** Standards cover a smaller number of concepts in greater depth rather than learning about many different concepts at a surface level.
- **Coherence:** Standards progress logically from one topic to another.⁵⁴

Over recent years, Tennessee made significant shifts in policy and practice to raise expectations for students. As a result, parents, educators, and policymakers have recognized that students achieve more when expectations are high. For example, students increasingly learn and practice key concepts in the context of real-world problems, leading to greater student engagement with the material and a deeper level of understanding.⁵⁵ Students are also challenged to make connections between subject areas and to think about multiple ways to approach a problem.

Since the adoption of Tennessee's State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics in 2010, educators throughout the state have made great progress in implementing the new, more challenging standards. However, the transition to new standards will not be complete until Tennessee implements high-quality assessments that are fully aligned to those standards.

Educators need data from assessments to make informed decisions about instructional strategies. Teachers use assessment data to monitor students' progress toward mastery of standards and to tailor their instruction to the needs of individual students.⁵⁶ Assessments also help students and parents know whether they are on track for success after high school.⁵⁷ To get the most accurate and useful information about student progress toward postsecondary and workforce readiness, assessments must align with the standards that guide teachers in their classrooms.⁵⁸

Aligning assessments and standards enables teachers to focus on ensuring students master skills and content, rather than "teaching to the test." A high-quality assessment has a positive impact on the quality of instruction because the skills students need for the test are the same skills they will need for future success in postsecondary education and the workforce.⁵⁹

UPDATE ON THE WORK

Assessment. Tennessee initially planned to implement the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment during the 2014-15 school year. However, legislation passed by the Tennessee General Assembly during the 2014 legislative session delayed the implementation of an aligned, college and career ready assessment and led the state to offer a Request for Proposals (RFP) process for a new assessment.⁶⁰ In the 2014-15 school year, Tennessee students in grades 3-8 took the TCAP Achievement



Test to measure what they had learned over the course of the year. High school students took End of Course (EOC) exams, also part of the TCAP testing program. While these assessments provided educators and parents with some useful information about students' progress, they were not fully aligned with the state's academic standards.

DISTINGUISHING STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

Academic **standards** are a common set of expectations that establish desired learning outcomes for students at each subject and grade level. Decisions about standards are made at the state level and apply to all public schools in Tennessee. **Curriculum** is the locally developed plan that outlines what teachers and students will do throughout the school year in order to achieve the learning outcomes defined in standards. Curriculum is generally far more detailed than standards and may include particular activities, lesson plans, assignments, or textbooks.⁶¹ Decisions about curriculum are made at the district, school, or classroom level.



Powerful beyond measure

During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, many educators expressed frustration with the continued misalignment of standards and assessments. For some teachers, 2014-15 was their fourth year of implementing Tennessee's State Standards, yet

the assessment their students took at the end of the year still reflected the old academic standards. Generally, educators who participated in SCORE's Listening Tour expressed a strong desire for an aligned assessment.⁶²

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Formative assessments are an integral part of the instructional process. They provide immediate feedback to teachers and students, indicating if shifts in teaching or learning must occur to improve students' progress toward mastery on standards or skills. These assessments are short in nature and can take anywhere between a few seconds to a small portion of a class period. A reading or math quiz is an example of a formative assessment. Formative assessments can be individualized to meet the needs of different students. Teachers often use formative assessments on a daily basis to gauge students' understanding of content and to get the feedback they need to make adjustments to their instruction.⁶⁵

Summative assessments are generally given at a specific point in time such as the end of an instructional unit, the end of a semester, or the end of the school year. These assessments measure student progress or whether a student has met a set of content standards.⁶³ A final exam in a biology class or the TNReady assessment are examples of a summative assessment. Summative assessments often take a full class period or instructional block to administer, but they are generally given less frequently than interim or formative assessments. In Tennessee, data from statewide summative assessments form an important component of the state's accountability system, impacting important decisions made at the school, district, and state levels.

Interim or benchmark assessments generally occur between formative and summative assessments. Interim assessments aim to evaluate students' progress toward mastery on a set of specific academic goals or standards and are designed to inform decisions at the classroom, school, or district level. Often, school or district leadership identifies which interim assessments to administer, rather than the teacher. The results of these assessments can serve many purposes, including predicting a student's performance on an end-of-year assessment, evaluating a program or type of instruction, or identifying gaps in student learning.⁶⁴ In Tennessee, many districts implement interim assessments to predict student performance on TCAP assessments. Schools and teachers also use interim assessment results to inform professional learning opportunities for teachers, to identify students in need of intervention, and to adjust classroom instruction to better meet the needs of students.

TNReady. In the 2015-16 school year, Tennessee will implement a new assessment, called TNReady, which was developed in partnership with Measurement Inc. following the RFP process outlined previously. TNReady assessments align with Tennessee's State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. TNReady replaces the old TCAP tests for English Language Arts, Math, and Writing in grades 3-11 and will be different from Tennessee's previous TCAP assessments in several ways.⁶⁶ Differences include:

- **Online administration:** Students take TNReady on a desktop computer, laptop, or tablet. For schools that do not have the capacity to administer the test online, a paper and pencil version is available. In summer 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education surveyed schools and districts about their readiness to take the new assessment online. More than 99 percent of schools reported their networks met the requirements outlined by the state to administer the assessment online, and 90 percent of schools reported they had an adequate number of devices to administer the test online.⁶⁷
- **Two parts:** Students will take TNReady Part I in February or March 2016. Part I of the assessment includes constructed response and essay questions. Students will take Part II in April or May. Part II consists of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. High school students on a fall block schedule took Part I of TNReady in November and Part II of TNReady in December.
- **Testing windows:** Four-week testing windows give districts and schools more flexibility to decide when students will take the TNReady tests and minimize disruption to instructional time. While these testing windows are longer than in previous years, students will spend a similar amount of time on the TNReady assessment as they did on TCAP Achievement Tests and End of Course exams.
- **New question types:** TNReady moves beyond multiple-choice items and asks students to solve multi-step problems, write extended responses, and support their answers with evidence.

- **Improved alignment with Tennessee's State Standards:** The standards teachers teach in their classrooms will be the same standards that are assessed on TNReady.⁶⁸ Additionally, if changes are made to Tennessee's State Standards, TNReady will be adjusted to maintain alignment with the standards.

The Tennessee Department of Education has taken several steps to help educators and students prepare for the new TNReady assessment. During the 2014-15 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education offered Assessment Information Meetings in each region of the state. The Tennessee Department of Education also offered follow-up Assessment Information Meetings in October 2015. These meetings were targeted at district leaders and covered a variety of information on TNReady, including test scheduling, technology requirements, test design and item types, and accommodations and accessibility features. The Tennessee Department of Education's spring 2015 Leadership Course for school leaders and Summer Trainings for teachers also included information about the new assessment.⁶⁹

In addition to these informational meetings and trainings, the Tennessee Department of Education made two online tools available to teachers, students, and parents to help them prepare for TNReady. The first is a TNReady Item Sampler, available on a website called MICA. Teachers gained access to MICA in May 2015, and students were able to log into the site in September. Through MICA, teachers and students can access sample questions for each grade level and subject that are similar to the items that will be on TNReady. The Tennessee Department of Education also offers an online TNReady Practice Test. This practice test uses the MIST testing platform, the same platform that will be used for the actual test. The TNReady Practice Test was first made available in September 2015. Nearly 1.5 million practice tests were completed during the first practice test period. Practice tests will be available in January and March 2016.⁷⁰

After the TNReady assessment was developed, higher education faculty from Tennessee institutions evaluated the TNReady assessment for alignment



to postsecondary needs. In October 2015, the higher education review found that high school TNReady assessments could serve as accurate indicators of student readiness for postsecondary education.

Legislative Efforts. During the 2015 legislative session, there were a number of attempts to further delay the implementation of the TNReady assessment and prohibit the implementation of other assessments such as ACT or assessments in kindergarten, first, and second grade. These bills were debated and eventually voted down in the House Education Instruction and Programs Subcommittee.⁷¹

Senate Bill 10/House Bill 10, which was enacted, requires that students pass a civics test in order to receive a high school diploma. The test will be constructed by school districts using questions from the test United States Citizenship and Immigration Services administers to people seeking to become

naturalized citizens. Students must answer 70 percent of questions correctly in order to pass and may take the test as many times as necessary.⁷²

Assessment Task Force. In March 2015, Commissioner of Education Candice McQueen announced the formation of the Tennessee Task Force on Student Testing and Assessment. The purpose of the task force was to identify best practices in testing and to examine how school-level assessments align with required state tests. Task force members included teachers, school and district leaders, state-level education leaders, parents, one high school student, and other education stakeholders.⁷³

Concern about the issue of over-testing served as a primary motivation for establishing the task

force. According to the Tennessee Department of Education's 2015 Educator Survey, 69 percent of teachers thought students spend too much time taking statewide standardized exams and 62 percent of teachers thought they spend too much time preparing for statewide exams.⁷⁴ At the same time, a statewide public opinion survey commissioned by the Tennessee Association of Business Foundation in April 2015 found that 43 percent of Tennessee voters thought students in public schools were given the right amount of tests, while 35 percent thought students were given too many tests. Half of parents in the same survey thought that students took the right amount of tests.⁷⁵

In September 2015, the task force released its final report. Through this report, the task force proposed guiding principles for summative standardized assessments, formative assessments, and test preparation and logistics.

Based on these principles, the task force made 16 recommendations. Key recommendations included:

- Improving transparency by releasing test items for students, parents, and educators
- Eliminating the kindergarten and first grade standardized test option
- Eliminating the 8th grade EXPLORE test and the 10th grade PLAN test
- Providing expectations to districts regarding formative assessment usage and communication
- Creating additional input opportunities for parents on the issue of assessment
- Ensuring that institutions of higher education validate and use TNReady as a measure of postsecondary and career readiness and as a tool to determine remedial placement⁷⁶

To support the work of the task force and gather critical feedback from educators on the issue of assessment, SCORE conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups with teachers, principals, and district leaders with the goal of identifying successes



and challenges related to state- and district-level assessments. In September, SCORE released the findings of this work in a report, *Teaching, Testing, and Time: Educator Voices on Improving Assessment in Tennessee*. Key takeaways from this report include:

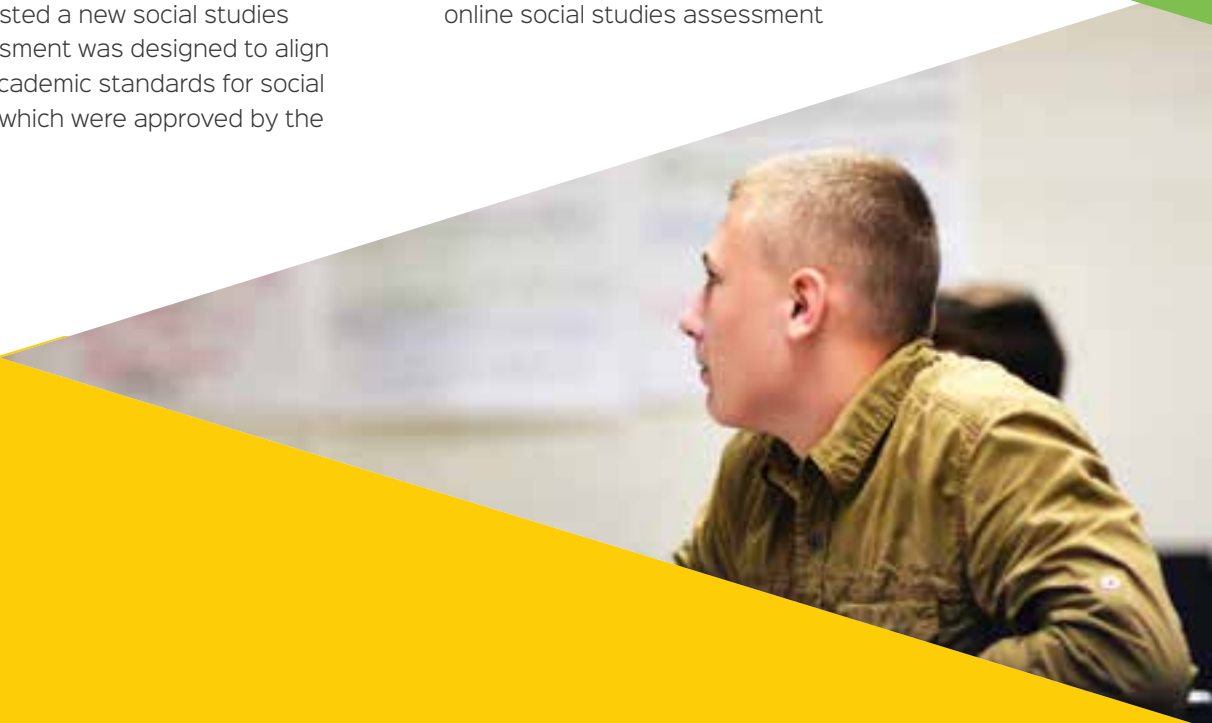
- Teachers, principals, and district leaders continuously pointed to the unique value of assessment in driving key decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels. For example, educators discussed using data from assessments to drive instruction, teacher support practices, and student interventions.
- District leaders and principals consistently identified assessment logistics, such as scheduling assessments and implementing technology-based assessments, as top challenges faced in their roles.
- Teachers consistently identified instructional time lost because of both district- and state-level assessments as a top challenge faced in their roles.⁷⁷

Social Studies Assessment. In the 2014-15 school year, Tennessee field-tested a new social studies assessment. This assessment was designed to align with Tennessee's new academic standards for social studies and US History, which were approved by the

State Board of Education in July 2013.⁷⁸ The results of the field test did not factor into students' grades or teachers' evaluation scores.

In 2015-16, Tennessee's new social studies assessment will be fully implemented. Results from this assessment will factor into students' grades and teachers' evaluations. Students will take the test in two parts using the same online platform they use for TNReady. Unlike the previous social studies assessment, the new assessment includes an extended response component, which asks students to support their answers with evidence from a non-fiction text.⁷⁹

During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, educators voiced some concern regarding the new social studies assessment. While most agree that the previous social studies test did not challenge students sufficiently, many educators feel that the new assessment is too difficult. Many schools also experienced technical difficulties during online administration of a pilot test, which led to the transition to the MIST platform for further online social studies assessment



administration. Schools need more instructional and technical support to ensure a successful transition to the new assessment.⁸⁰

Technology-Based Assessments. Both TNReady and Tennessee's new social studies assessment will be administered online using the MIST testing platform.⁸¹ Online assessments offer several advantages over traditional paper-and-pencil tests, including the possibility of faster scoring, a wider range of question types, and the ability to capture more detailed data, such as how much time a student spent answering a particular question.⁸² Online assessments also help prepare students for college and the workforce, where comfort with technology is increasingly essential.⁸³ However, these assessments come with their own set of challenges. With paper-and-pencil tests, it is usually possible to test every student in the building at the same time. Many schools do not have enough devices

or Internet bandwidth to do the same with online assessments. This means students must take tests in shifts, which can be disruptive to instruction without an intentional implementation plan. This disruption is

heightened if students encounter technical difficulties with their device, the Internet connection, or the testing platform.⁸⁴

Student readiness for online assessments remains a concern among some educators. While some teachers feel that their students are comfortable with computers, many are concerned that their students lack the technology skills necessary to succeed on a computer-based test. Especially in the lower grades, students need more opportunities to practice keyboarding and other essential computer skills. Limited access to devices, however, has caused some schools to find it difficult to provide this practice time.⁸⁵

Interim and Benchmark Assessments. Teachers use interim and benchmark assessments to monitor student learning throughout the school year. These assessments provide teachers with immediate feedback on which skills each student has mastered and the skills for which a student needs additional support to master. These timely data allow teachers to adjust their instruction to meet each student's needs. Teachers can make their own interim and benchmark assessments, or districts can purchase them from a vendor. They may be taken with paper and pencil or online.

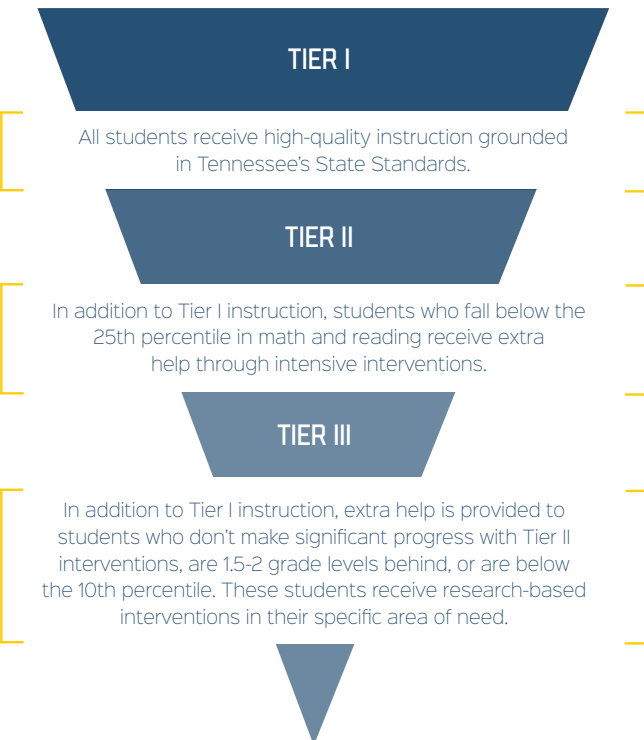
Educators provided feedback on interim and benchmark assessments during SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour. Teachers and principals noted that



these assessments provide essential data for informing instruction. However, many educators expressed dissatisfaction with the interim and benchmark assessments available to them, especially those purchased from outside vendors. Common concerns included that the assessments are not fully aligned to standards and that the data reports teachers receive are not detailed enough. Some educators mentioned having to settle for lower-quality assessments because of deficient funding. Others expressed a desire for the state to provide more guidance on which interim and benchmark assessments to use. Still others would like the state to create a single statewide benchmark assessment.⁸⁶

RTI². Tennessee educators use the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) framework to identify students in need of intervention in reading, math, or writing. Since July 2014, RTI² has been the sole method by which Tennessee students can be identified as having a specific learning disability. RTI² is a tiered model that provides progressively more intensive interventions based on individual student needs and responses to prior interventions. Students receiving interventions are assessed periodically to monitor their progress.⁸⁷ The RTI² model is illustrated in *Figure 5*.

FIGURE 5. THE RTI² MODEL ⁸⁸



All Tennessee elementary schools began implementing RTI² during the 2014-15 school year. For middle and high schools, 2015-16 is the first year of full implementation. The Tennessee Department of Education has supported RTI² implementation by training school-level teams and providing technical assistance to districts on issues such as data analysis and differentiated instruction.⁸⁹ While RTI² is a state requirement, there is no specific state funding allotment for this intervention.

Educators who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour had mixed opinions about RTI². Many felt that it was a much-needed change and had already seen promising results. Some cited it as one of the most positive changes to Tennessee education policy and practice in the past few years. Other educators felt, however, that the state provided insufficient guidance and support for implementing RTI². Several cited lack of funding or personnel as a serious challenge to implementation. Some had difficulty finding time in the school day to schedule interventions. Finally, many educators were concerned about the amount of assessment required to fully implement RTI².⁹⁰

Tennessee's State Standards. Implementation of Tennessee's current standards in English language arts and math began in the 2011-12 school year with kindergarten through second grade. In the 2012-13 school year, all districts in Tennessee implemented the new math standards in grades 3-8, while 60 districts piloted the new English language arts standards. Districts statewide fully implemented the standards in both subjects and all grades beginning in the 2013-14 school year. This section provides an overview of recent policy and legislative changes related to Tennessee's State Standards and highlights the successes and challenges educators face in the implementation of the standards.

Reviewing Tennessee's State Standards.

In October 2014, Governor Haslam announced a public review process for Tennessee's State Standards for English language arts and math. The State Board of Education typically reviews academic



standards every six years, but following increased public discussion surrounding the standards, the governor sought to give all stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback after four years of implementation. From November 2014 through April 2015, Tennesseans could log onto a website to review and comment on each of the English language arts (ELA) and math content standards. During this six-month period, nearly 3,000 people (mostly teachers) logged into the site, made a total of 131,424 reviews of the standards, and left over 20,000 comments.⁹¹ This public input helped inform the work of the six advisory teams appointed by the State Board of Education to review and recommend changes to the current standards. These advisory teams included classroom teachers across grade levels, subject areas, and geographic regions of the state. These advisory teams reported to two Standards Review and Development Committees, one for English language arts and one for math. The committees, in turn, worked to develop a set of recommendations for changes to Tennessee's State Standards.

Educators who participated in SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour were generally pleased that Governor Haslam provided an opportunity for teachers and the general public to comment on Tennessee's State Standards. However, relatively few said that they had participated in the review process themselves. While some teachers said that their principal encouraged or even required them to participate, others were not aware that a public comment process took place.⁹²

In addition to reviewing Tennessee's State Standards for ELA and math, Tennessee's social studies and science standards are also under review. Revisions to Tennessee's science standards were originally developed by teachers from across the state in fall 2014 and spring 2015. These revisions are posted on a website that is open for public review. The State Board of Education plans to work with the Southern Regional Education Board to collect and analyze the comments submitted on the website. Similarly to the process used to review Tennessee's ELA and math standards, educator development teams will review feedback on the draft science standards and make additional changes to the standards in early 2016. Another draft set of science standards will be posted to a public website in spring 2016 for comment, and a Standards Recommendation Committee will then

make a final recommendation to the State Board of Education about the adoption of the new science standards in July 2016. Implementation for these standards is scheduled for the 2018-19 school year.⁹³

In summer 2015, the State Board of Education decided to review Tennessee's social studies standards after four years of implementation rather than the required six years. This earlier review responded to concerns from educators and the public related to the content of the current social studies standards. This process will follow a similar approach to the review of Tennessee's ELA, math, and science standards. The current social studies standards will be posted for public review in January 2016.

Legislative Change. During the 2015 session, legislators introduced several bills that would have repealed or resulted in significant changes to Tennessee's State Standards for English and math, despite the review process that was already underway. For example, House Bill 1267/Senate Bill 1194 would have required each local school board to adopt their own academic standards in mathematics, science, geography, history, reading/ language arts, and writing. This bill was eventually taken off notice in the House Education Instruction & Programs Subcommittee.⁹⁴ Additionally, House Bill 1263/Senate Bill 804 intended to discontinue the use of the state's current academic standards and implement the Tennessee Diploma Project Standards in their place until the State Board adopted new, Tennessee-specific standards. The House Education Instruction & Programs subcommittee considered, but ultimately did not pass this bill on to the full House.⁹⁵ Amid legislative debate on the standards, the higher education community as well as the Tennessee Organization for School Superintendents made requests to the legislature for stability in the state's standards.

Ultimately, policymakers reached a compromise: House Bill 1035/Senate Bill 1163, which calls for Tennessee's State Standards to be reviewed and revised.⁹⁶ This bill codifies the standards review process initiated by Governor Haslam and adds an additional layer of review in the form of a Standards Recommendation Committee. This committee consists of ten members. The governor appointed four members of the group, while the Lieutenant Governor

and Speaker of the House of Representatives each appointed three members. State leaders will appoint members of standards recommendation committees to review the science standards and social studies standards.⁹⁷

Two Standards Review and Development committees composed of content expert educators for ELA and math were charged with developing educational standards for review by the Standards Recommendation Committee. The review and development committees met through summer 2015 to prepare Tennessee's new standards for ELA and math, and drafts of those standards were made available online by the State Board of Education in October. The standards review website enabled the public to comment and recommend maintaining, revising, or removing individual learning standards. State Board of Education staff collected feedback and response data for presentation to the Standards Recommendation Committee at its November meeting. Reviewers from the general public provided supportive feedback overall, encouraging the committee to maintain most standards as written by the review and development teams.

Through fall 2015, the State Board of Education also hosted regional roundtables to provide additional opportunities to incorporate feedback from educators and parents on the draft ELA and math standards. During those sessions, teachers and parents identified strengths of the draft standards, as well as areas for the Standards Recommendation Committee and State Board of Education to consider in their work to ensure the final standards would be both rigorous and developmentally appropriate for each grade level and both subject areas. Participants in the roundtables generally voiced support for keeping the standards as drafted, and state board staff members presented their specific feedback for potential changes and improvements to the Standards Recommendation Committee for consideration. The Standards Recommendation Committee also received reviews of draft ELA and math standards from higher education faculty, the Southern Regional Education Board, and SCORE. Recommendations from these reviews were presented to the committee for consideration.

In January 2016, the Standards Recommendation Committee will make a formal recommendation to the State Board of Education for changes to the standards. The State Board of Education will review feedback from the public and the Standards Recommendation Committee and make final revisions to the standards based on this feedback in early 2016. The revised English language arts and math standards will be fully implemented in the 2017-18 school year.

State Support for Standards Implementation.

In 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education continued to provide teachers and school leaders with professional learning opportunities related to Tennessee's State Standards. In spring 2015, the TDOE offered a Leadership Course for school leaders and district instructional staff. This course focused on Tennessee's new assessments, writing best practices, instructional tools, and resource supports.⁹⁸ The Tennessee Department of Education's 2015 Summer Training for teachers offered two-day trainings in four content areas: early grades, math, English language arts, and social studies.⁹⁹ These trainings were offered in each COPE Region and provided teachers with strategies and tools to help students meet the high expectations set by Tennessee's State Standards.¹⁰⁰

Implementing Tennessee's State Standards in the Classroom. During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, many teachers, principals, and district staff praised the rigor and coherence of Tennessee's State Standards. For example, teachers expressed appreciation for the way key concepts build on each other from one grade to the next. They also noted that the standards challenge students to apply concepts to real-world situations.¹⁰¹

Despite the great progress educators have made in implementing Tennessee's State Standards, important challenges remain. While the current standards seek to cover fewer topics in greater depth, some educators still feel that there are too many standards and that it is not reasonable to expect teachers to cover them all. Others believe that some standards are so challenging that they are developmentally inappropriate for the grade in which they are taught. Educators also expressed frustration with the gaps

SCORE'S REVIEW OF TENNESSEE'S DRAFT ELA AND MATH STANDARDS

As part of the public review of Tennessee's draft ELA and math standards in October through November 2015, SCORE conducted an in-depth review to evaluate the standards across six key criteria for high-quality standards: rigor, focus, coherence, specificity, clarity/accessibility, and measurability.

In general, the SCORE review found the draft standards for both ELA and math to reflect levels of rigor as high as or higher than those of current standards. The draft standards are clear, coherent, and specific. State Board of Education staff included SCORE's feedback in a larger set of recommendations presented to the Standards Recommendation Committee during its December meeting. Based on the committee's approval, ELA and math working groups addressed the recommendations to produce a revised set of draft standards by mid-January 2016.



in student learning that can occur as a result of transitioning from one set of standards to another.¹⁰² The standards review process aims to address these concerns and others by leading to a new set of standards that maintains the rigor and coherence of Tennessee's current academic standards.

New Standards for Career and Technical Education.

In 2014, the Tennessee Department of Education's Division of Career and Technical Education completed a thorough revision of standards for career and technical education (CTE) courses in Tennessee. The purpose of the revision was to increase the rigor of CTE courses and ensure that all CTE courses align with the academic, postsecondary, and career opportunities available in Tennessee. During the revision process, the Tennessee Department of Education gathered input from statewide industry groups, state legislators, and several hundred CTE educators from across the state. Industry Advisory Council meetings for 11 different career clusters also helped inform the standards and programs of study. In all, the TDOE created new or revised standards for nearly 200 courses. More than 100 of these course changes were implemented during the 2014-15 school

year, and the remaining courses were implemented in 2015-16.¹⁰³

In 2015, the Division of Career and Technical Education held regional professional development events focused on content and instructional shifts for the new and revised CTE course standards. In July, the 2015 Institute for CTE Educators, held at the Music City Center in Nashville, brought together educators from across the state for a week of professional development activities specific to each career cluster.¹⁰⁵

To ensure each Tennessee high school student graduates prepared for success in college and the workforce, the state must remain committed to rigorous academic standards that challenge each student to reach his or her full potential. As the state prepares to implement new standards in English language arts and math, policymakers, educators, parents, and local community partners must share in this commitment.

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

Since 2010, Tennessee has passed and adopted a series of innovative policies aimed at solving persistent problems in Tennessee's schools. From turning around the state's lowest performing schools to increasing the rate of Tennessee students graduating from high school prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce, education partners across the state have collaborated on flagship initiatives that aim to break down some of the most significant barriers Tennessee students face on their paths to success. The following section provides an overview of innovative initiatives that aim to address significant challenges in Tennessee schools.

UPDATE ON THE WORK

School Turnaround. Over the past several years, the state has launched a series of innovative initiatives to enable the lowest performing 5 percent of schools to improve and become high-performing schools. The two most prominent turnaround initiatives, the Achievement School District and Innovation Zones (iZones), are described below. In addition to these efforts, the department continues to support additional priority schools that are not being served through ASD or iZones. This support includes approved plans that lead to additional funding through School Improvement Grants (SIG). The department is also strategically using SIG funds to replicate the practices that are proving to increase student achievement. SIG funds also have been used to support a new iZone incubator in Shelby County.

Achievement School District. The state established the Achievement School District (ASD) in 2011 as a school district designed to move the bottom 5 percent of schools in Tennessee into the top 25 percent within five years. Schools with students performing in the bottom 5 percent based on achievement results as measured by state standardized tests are eligible to be administered by the ASD. The ASD either runs these schools directly or turns the schools over to approved charter school operators. Not every school that is in the bottom 5 percent has become part of the ASD. Currently, there are 29 schools in the ASD, including 27 schools

in Memphis and two in Nashville.¹⁰⁶ The ASD serves significant populations of historically disadvantaged groups of students with a student body that is 96.6 percent African American and 92.5 percent economically disadvantaged.¹⁰⁷

ASD schools are required to occupy their current school building and serve students zoned for that public school. Operators must show substantial growth. Otherwise, the ASD will assign the school to another operator or manage it directly. These turnaround efforts allow for more innovative practices: Many schools have employed turnaround strategies such as extended school days, replacing underperforming teachers, intensive teacher coaching and professional development, and using technology as a foundational part of the instructional day.¹⁰⁸

While the results of ASD schools did not initially meet all of the district's aggressive goals during its first two years of operation, third-year results were promising:

- ASD student scores grew faster than the rest of the state in math and science.
- Four out of five ASD schools in Frayser (Memphis) had Level 5 TVAAS growth, and math and science proficiency grew by double digits.
- Students in first year full turnaround high schools made proficiency gains in every subject, including double-digit growth in Algebra and English.¹⁰⁹

In the 2015-16 school year, these schools joined the ASD:

- Cornerstone Prep-Denver Campus
- KIPP Memphis Preparatory Elementary
- Libertas School at Brookmeade
- Memphis Scholars Florida-Kansas
- Neely's Bend College Prep
- Wooddale Middle School ¹¹⁰

Legislative Change. In April 2015, legislators passed HB 473/SB 293 allowing for expanded enrollment in ASD schools. Governor Haslam subsequently signed this legislation into law. The new enrollment provisions allow out-of-zone students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, who have failed statewide achievement tests, or who are directly related to an ASD school employee to comprise up to 25 percent of students in any ASD-operated school. Qualifying students may enroll if seats remain open in ASD schools following the initial enrollment period for students zoned to the school or already attending Priority schools.

Innovation Zone. Similar to the ASD, iZone schools perform in the bottom 5 percent of schools in Tennessee, as measured by student achievement on TCAP assessments, and aim to move into the top 25 percent of schools within five years. Local school districts continue to manage these schools, rather than a statewide district or charter school operator. In many ways, iZone schools are a locally run counterpart to the state-run ASD.¹¹¹ Currently there are eighteen iZone schools in Shelby County Schools and six in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.¹¹²

To improve these schools, districts grant iZone schools additional flexibility over their budgets, staffing, schedules, and programming. Many of these schools have implemented innovative practices such as extended school days and using technology to supplement teaching through blended



learning. Recent results of iZone schools demonstrate that they show greater learning gains than other district schools, particularly in mathematics.¹¹³

Charter School Growth. An expanding sector of public charter schools provides opportunities for schools with enhanced flexibility to use innovative practices to promote student learning growth and achievement. According to the Tennessee Charter School Center (TCSC), 30 charter schools enrolled just over 6,900 students statewide in 2011. Four years later, 77 district-approved charter schools served more than 21,000 students, in addition to nearly 8,000 students served by 21 ASD-approved charters. TCSC estimates charter schools now enroll 3 percent of students statewide, including 16.5 percent of students in Memphis. Charter schools generally serve higher proportions of students from economically disadvantaged households and who are English language learners. Although they receive funding through the Basic Education Program (BEP) formula, charter schools do not receive public funding for facilities and capital expenditures.

As charter schools work to meet the needs of their students, as well as accountability measures and financial and facility needs, high-performing charters have used innovative approaches to promote student learning growth and achievement. In 2015, two charter schools were named SCORE Prize winners – New Vision Academy in the middle school category and The Soulsville Charter School in the high school category – and a third, KIPP Academy Nashville, was a finalist in the middle school category. Soulsville boasts a graduation rate of 98.5 percent. Nearly 86 percent of students scored proficient or advanced in Algebra I, and 65 percent of students scored proficient or advanced in English II. Soulsville, KIPP Nashville, and New Vision Academy exemplify how high-performing charter schools leverage flexibility in operations and collaborative instructional practices, along with strong focuses on family involvement and college preparation, to positively impact the educational trajectories of their students, many of whom come from historically underserved populations. The performance of students in these schools may provide examples of innovations in practice with

broader application in traditional public schools and other schools in the state’s growing charter sector.

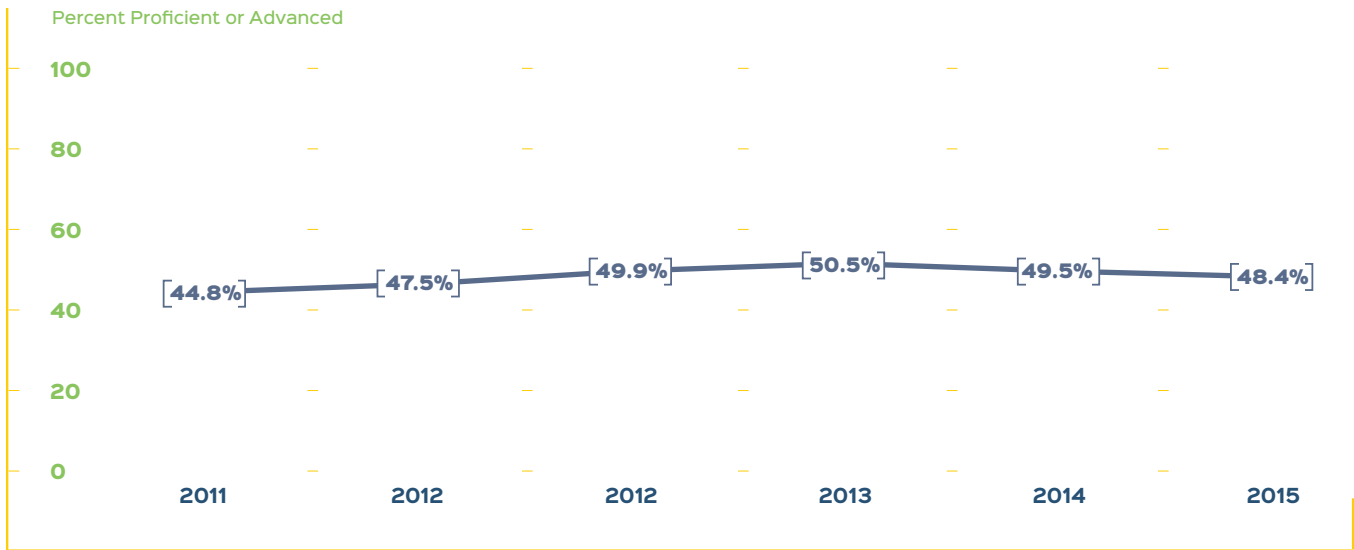
Literacy. For students to perform at their highest level, they must learn in well-supported schools with strong leadership. Students must experience great teaching across all subjects and grade levels, with foundational literacy and mathematics skills in early grades providing the foundation for success in complex material through later grades.

Research indicates that gaps in language skills emerge long before children enter kindergarten. A 2015 study found that significant gaps in oral vocabulary are already present at age two. Males, children born with low birth weight, and children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds are all likely to have a smaller oral vocabulary. Even after applying numerous statistical controls, this early gap in vocabulary is predictive of reading achievement, math achievement, and behavioral function at kindergarten entry.¹¹⁴

These early gaps in literacy skills have long-term consequences: Children who enter kindergarten with weaker reading skills than their peers are more likely to have weak reading skills in later grades as well.¹¹⁵ Children who can read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to graduate from high school on time than those who cannot.¹¹⁶ If students in Tennessee are to graduate from high school ready for college and career, they must develop strong early grades literacy skills. In this state, however, of over 6,000 students rated below basic in third grade English language arts, less than 3 percent reach proficiency by fifth grade.¹¹⁷

Reading Achievement in Grades 3-8. As shown in Figure 6, the percentage of Tennessee students in grades 3-8 who scored proficient or advanced on the TCAP reading/language arts assessment has changed little over the past few years. After showing a modest upward trend from 2010-2013, scores declined slightly in both 2014 and 2015. In contrast, scores on the math and science TCAP assessments have increased each year since 2010.¹¹⁸

FIGURE 6. TCAP 3-8 READING LANGUAGE ARTS RESULTS, 2011-15 ¹¹⁹



In response to these reading scores, the Tennessee Department of Education has made literacy instruction a top priority and launched multiple innovative initiatives to support the development of reading and literacy skills. These initiatives are described below.

Ready to Read and Read to Be Ready. During the first meeting of Governor Haslam’s Teachers Cabinet on July 16, 2015, Education Commissioner Candice McQueen announced a new early literacy initiative called Ready to Read.¹²⁰ Spurred by Tennessee’s stagnant reading scores, which Commissioner McQueen calls “a true ethical and moral dilemma,” the Tennessee Department of Education will partner with other state agencies to ensure that Tennessee students enter kindergarten ready to read. The department will pursue this goal by providing parents and caregivers with more resources about reading and by creating and implementing higher standards for literacy in public pre-kindergarten programs and private childcare centers.¹²¹

The Tennessee Department of Education is also developing literacy assessment tools for grades K-2 that will help teachers understand their students’ literacy skills. These tools include a new second grade standardized test to replace the SAT-10, the test that some districts currently use to assess students

in grades K-2. Like the SAT-10, the new test will be optional. Unlike the SAT-10, however, the new test will align with Tennessee’s State Standards and only focus on second grade.

As a first step in implementing Ready to Read, the Tennessee Department of Education recently selected a group of educators to serve on an Early Literacy Council. Members of this council will help state officials decide how to define “third-grade readiness,” how to assess early literacy, and what to include in upcoming teacher trainings on early literacy.¹²²

While Ready to Read will focus on infancy through second grade, its companion program, Read to be Ready, will concentrate on preparing students in grades three and higher for the new TNReady reading assessment. Compared to the previous TCAP reading assessment, TNReady will include more rigorous texts and require students to support their answers with evidence.¹²³ Read to be Ready will provide teachers with materials to help prepare students for the new test. The initiative will also involve expanding literacy instruction courses for teachers and relying on literacy coaches to model lessons and help create lesson plans. State officials are also working on rewriting literacy standards for teacher preparation programs.¹²⁴



Courses on Reading Instruction and Intervention.

To ensure Tennessee teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to help their students succeed in reading, the Tennessee Department of Education is offering four seven-part courses in reading instruction and intervention. The four courses include K-3 Instruction, K-3 Intervention, 4-5 Intervention, and 6-12 Intervention. These courses are offered regionally through the Centers for Regional Excellence (CORE).¹²⁵

Closing Skills Gaps. As of 2013, 33 percent of Tennesseans ages 25-64 had at least an associate's degree, ranking Tennessee 42nd in the nation in postsecondary attainment.¹²⁶ By 2020, nearly 66 percent of jobs in Tennessee will require some type of postsecondary education.¹²⁷ If the percentage of Tennesseans with postsecondary credentials

does not increase rapidly, employers will be unable to fill many of these jobs. In some industries, such as construction, transportation and logistics, and banking and finance, employers are already struggling to find enough qualified workers.¹²⁸ To address this skills gap, Governor Haslam launched the Drive to 55 initiative in 2013 with the goal of increasing the proportion of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or certificate to 55 percent by 2025.¹²⁹ Key components of Drive to 55 as well as other programs aimed at closing skills gaps and increasing postsecondary enrollment and completion in Tennessee are described below.

Tennessee Promise. In 2014, the Tennessee General Assembly passed House Bill 2491/Senate Bill 2471, creating the Tennessee Promise program.¹³⁰ The first program of its kind in the nation, Tennessee Promise

allows Tennessee high school graduates to attend a community college or Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) free of tuition and fees. Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship, meaning it covers tuition and fees not already covered by Pell grants, the HOPE scholarship, or state student assistance funds. The program also matches students with mentors who guide them through the college search and application process.¹³¹

The high school class of 2015 was the first class eligible for Tennessee Promise. To participate, students had to fill out an application by November of their senior year. More than 58,000 students (nearly 90 percent of high school seniors in the state) applied.¹³² During the spring of their senior year, participants had to attend mandatory meetings with their mentor, fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), apply to a community or technical college, and participate in community service activities by August 1.¹³³ To remain eligible for the scholarship, students must enroll full-time, maintain continuous enrollment, complete eight hours of community service per term, and maintain a GPA of at least 2.0.¹³⁴

In the fall 2015 semester, the first class of Tennessee Promise students arrived on community and technical college campuses throughout the state. Tennessee's 13 community colleges saw a 24 percent jump in full-time enrollment, with certain campuses seeing even larger growth.¹³⁵ The state's 27 TCATs saw an average enrollment increase of about 18 percent, though this increase is likely the combined effect of the Tennessee Promise and the Tennessee Reconnect Program,¹³⁶ Governor Haslam's initiative to encourage adult learners to complete postsecondary credentials.

Program requirements for the Class of 2016 are the same as they were for the Class of 2015. Applications were due November 2, 2015, with nearly 60,000 students applying.¹³⁷ Going forward, the outcomes of Tennessee Promise should be monitored to ensure that scholarship recipients are completing postsecondary credentials that lead to rewarding careers in high-demand fields.

Tennessee LEAP. Created in 2013, the Tennessee Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) is a

competitive grant program that aims to eliminate skills gaps across the state by encouraging collaboration between education and industry. Local organizations identify skills gaps, develop programs to fill those gaps, and then apply for grants to help fund those programs. Governor Haslam's Workforce Sub-Cabinet reviewed grant applications and selected winners. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) then provided ongoing support to grant recipients.¹³⁸ In 2014, twelve programs from across the state received LEAP Grants totaling over 10 million dollars.¹³⁹

Pathways Tennessee. In 2012, Tennessee joined the Pathways to Prosperity Network, a multistate initiative led by the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Boston-based nonprofit Jobs for the Future.¹⁴¹ The goal of the network is to ensure that more students graduate from high school and attain a postsecondary credential that is highly valued in the labor market.¹⁴²

Tennessee's entrance into the Pathways to Prosperity Network led to the founding of Pathways Tennessee, an initiative that aims to provide Tennessee students with rigorous academic and career pathways linked to economic and labor market needs.¹⁴³ The Pathways Tennessee Framework includes the following components:

- Active industry involvement in student learning, starting in middle school
- Strong integration of student supports, interventions, and counseling
- Utilization of early warning systems and remediation strategies
- Allows students to acquire postsecondary credits and/or industry certifications in high school
- Supports seamless transition from secondary to postsecondary education institutions
- Participants have multiple entry and exit points throughout grades 13-16
- Program completers are competitive in Tennessee's fastest growing employment sectors¹⁴⁴

Pathways Tennessee began in 2013 in two pilot regions: Upper Cumberland and Southeast Tennessee.¹⁴⁵ In 2014, the initiative expanded to Southwest Tennessee, and in 2015 it expanded to Northwest, East, and Northeast Tennessee.¹⁴⁶ These regions match economic development regions identified by the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. In these communities, Pathways Tennessee has created opportunities for teachers to participate in externships in local industries and expanded dual credit opportunities for students.¹⁴⁷

Educational Technology. Across the nation, schools are increasingly making use of educational technology to enhance student learning.¹⁴⁸ Educational technology can take many forms, from digital resources that are integrated into traditional classroom instruction to fully online courses or virtual schools. There are a variety of options between these two examples, including blended learning, which combines online and in-person instruction.¹⁴⁹ To support digital learning, some schools and districts are investing in “one-to-one” initiatives, in which the school provides each student with a laptop computer or tablet that he or she can use both in school and at home.¹⁵⁰ While technology is an important resource for teachers and schools, technology is not a substitute for high-quality instruction. When expanding access to technology in classrooms, it is essential to provide teachers with high-quality professional learning opportunities focused on how to integrate technology into daily instruction. Below are descriptions of three programs that are bringing educational technology to Tennessee students.

Shelby County Blended Learning Pilot. In 2014, eighteen schools in Shelby County were selected to participate in a three-year blended learning pilot. The program, which is funded out of Shelby County Schools’ general budget and a grant from the Plough Foundation, provides a laptop computer to each student and teacher in participating schools.¹⁵¹ Using these laptops, students and teachers can access the program’s blended learning curriculum, which includes a mix of teacher-guided and self-

paced instruction focused primarily on reading and math.¹⁵² The 2015-16 school year is the second year of program implementation. If after three years of implementation the students in the pilot schools show larger gains in English language arts and math than students in other schools, the district will consider expanding the program to more schools.¹⁵³

Tennessee Digital Learning Project. In fall 2015, the Tennessee School Boards Association (TSBA) partnered with the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, the Tennessee Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the Tennessee Educational Technology Association to launch the Tennessee Digital Learning Project. This project aims to support school districts in their creation of a learning environment that prepares students for today’s digitally connected world. During the first phase of this project, free digital learning materials (such as textbooks, lesson plans, and videos) will be developed for fourteen high school courses. These resources will help equip high school students for life in a digital world while also saving districts money. Teams of teachers are currently working to develop the digital resources, and TSBA expects to launch the resources by April 2016.¹⁵⁴

Virtual Instruction to Accentuate Learning (VITAL). Putnam County Schools’ VITAL program began in 2008 as a small online credit-recovery program. The program has since expanded to include a variety of blended learning opportunities that reach about one-third of students in the district. In addition to credit recovery for students who have failed one or more classes, VITAL includes online intervention modules that help students who have fallen behind to catch up before they fail a class. Other components of VITAL include dual-credit courses with local colleges, a nine-week online personal finance course for all ninth grade students in the district, and online courses for homebound students. All VITAL courses rely on both an online teacher who is a subject-matter expert and an on-site facilitator who can provide face-to-face support to students.¹⁵⁵

Tennessee has an important story to tell of progress made in public education over the past five years. Students are rising to the challenge of higher expectations, and educators are using data and innovative practices to meet and exceed those expectations. To realize the full potential of the rigorous standards the state has developed, educators must receive the resources they need to ensure every student is prepared for success beyond high school. The following section presents five priority areas for the state to ensure 2016 can be a year in which people doing the hard work of improving education feel empowered in their efforts, students, families, educators, and community partners are all held to high expectations to advance this effort, and a culture of innovation is allowed to flourish.



PRIORITIES FOR 2016



Over the past year, educators across the state continued to implement higher standards in their classrooms, district leaders worked to implement a new principal evaluation system, Tennesseans reviewed Tennessee's State Standards to ensure they meet the needs of all Tennessee students, and state leaders developed and implemented the new TNReady assessment. Student outcomes in Tennessee continued to progress in most subjects and grade levels on TCAP and held steady on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). These shifts in policy and practice and growth in student achievement indicate that Tennessee remains on the path toward ensuring all students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce.

Even so, it is essential to reflect on the progress made and identify areas where more support is needed to accelerate growth in student learning in Tennessee. In spring 2015, SCORE held focus groups with nearly 300 teachers, principals, and district leaders from across the state to identify both successes and challenges faced in schools and classrooms over the past year. SCORE also conducted interviews with state and national education partners.

The feedback gathered during these focus groups and interviews as well as research on best practices in education laid the foundation for the priorities below.

Rather than serve as SCORE's priorities alone, these priorities should guide the work of all education partners in the state in the coming year. Throughout 2016, SCORE will work with its partners to push forward these priorities and measure progress toward identified goals.

IMPLEMENT TNREADY AND ALIGNED INTERIM ASSESSMENTS. *Ensure students, educators, and district leaders have the support and resources they need to successfully implement TNReady and aligned interim assessments. District assessment systems should protect instructional time while also providing educators with timely, accurate information they can use to support improved student learning.*



Educators and policymakers should remain committed to full implementation in the coming academic year.

Assessments provide educators with important information that helps guide their instruction and improve student learning. As Tennessee transitions to TNReady, students, teachers, principals, and district leaders must receive clear and consistent information. Educators and families also need resources to support implementation of the assessment and timely, actionable information about student progress toward college readiness after students take the assessment. In addition, many districts will transition to new interim assessments as a result of the transition to TNReady. Local school districts, with the support of the Tennessee Department of Education, should ensure their interim assessments align with Tennessee's State Standards and provide educators accurate feedback on student progress toward mastery of those standards. The Tennessee

Department of Education, local school districts, and school leaders should also protect instructional time as they transition to new interim assessments.

Ensure Stability in Statewide Assessments. *The Tennessee General Assembly should maintain stability in Tennessee's assessments, providing educators with adequate time to implement the state's standards and prepare students for success on the TNReady assessment. During the 2016 legislative session, the General Assembly should refrain from advancing any legislation that would alter the timeline for implementation of TNReady.* Tennessee's transition to higher standards in 2010 was an important step toward ensuring all Tennessee students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. Since the implementation of higher standards, educators across the state made significant shifts in their instruction to meet the needs of their students, and students rose to the challenge. Since 2011, there are 131,000 more students proficient in math and nearly 60,000 more students are proficient in science.¹⁵⁶ In the 2015-16 school year, Tennessee will



implement TNReady, a new statewide summative assessment. This assessment will align with Tennessee's State Standards and provide educators with integral feedback on student progress toward college readiness. For these reasons, it is essential to maintain stability in Tennessee's standards and assessments. This stability will provide students and educators with the time and support they need to successfully transition to these higher standards and more rigorous assessments.

Maintain a Strong Commitment to Annual Standardized Assessments. To ensure educators and parents have the information they need to prepare students for success in college and career, the General Assembly, Tennessee Department of Education, and State Board of Education should commit to maintaining annual statewide assessments in Tennessee. Annual statewide assessments play an important role in school improvement practices, providing parents, educators, and policymakers with

important information about students' academic performance and growth during a school year. Data from assessments allow parents and students to recognize when students are making progress and when students' academic needs are not being met. Such data allow educators to intervene early with students who are behind and to push higher-achieving students to perform at even higher levels.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, schools and districts use data from assessments to make important decisions about teacher hiring and teacher assignment. For these reasons, Tennessee's policymakers, educators, parents, and students must maintain commitment to annual statewide assessments, ensuring parents and educators have the information they need to prepare students for success in college and career.

Implement Recommendations from the Tennessee Task Force on Student Testing and Assessment. In March, Commissioner McQueen announced the formation of a Tennessee Task Force on Student Testing and Assessment. This task force convened a representative group of education stakeholders from across the state including teachers, parents, principals, district leaders, policymakers, and one high school student. This task force addressed the top challenges related to assessment in Tennessee and

DRIVING STUDENT LEARNING WITH INTERIM ASSESSMENTS AT COVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Districts and schools across the state have discovered over the past several years that having teachers and academic leaders develop interim assessments either at the school or district level can both serve as professional development and provide useful data on student improvement. At Covington High School, a SCORE Prize finalist in 2015 and previous SCORE Prize winner, teachers spent the past year developing interim assessments based on the state standards for English and math. The assessments are administered every 4.5 weeks and used to adjust both curriculum and intervention for the next 4.5 weeks.

Covington's assistant principal credits the creation of interim assessments as one of the drivers of the school's recent gains in both English and math. Teachers have a better sense of how well students are progressing against the standards, and because the assessments are built using the TNReady blueprints, they also have a better sense of how students understand the material for the end-of-course assessments. Additionally, the deep content knowledge required to build the assessments has enhanced teachers' grasp of the standards, leading to better instruction. The assessments are built into a data system that allows teachers to easily run reports on various standards and to adjust instruction to reteach something that has not been understood.



recommended solutions to these challenges moving forward.¹⁵⁸ The Tennessee Department of Education should implement the recommendations from the task force with specific attention to:

- **Creating High-Quality Assessment Reports.** *The Tennessee Department of Education should ensure reports from TNReady provide students, parents, and educators with the information they need to support student learning and measure student progress toward college and career readiness. As Tennessee transitions to the TNReady assessment, it is essential to ensure that reports from this assessment provide parents and educators with accurate information that drives shifts in instruction to better meet student needs. To ensure assessment reports meet the needs of all stakeholders, the Tennessee Department of*
- **Ensuring Success on Technology-Based Assessments.** *Local foundations, communities, and business partners should provide support to districts to ensure they have access to adequate infrastructure and technical support to effectively implement technology-based assessments. As schools and districts transition to computer-based assessments, they must have the support they need to effectively prepare students for success on technology-based assessments and administer computer-based assessments in their school. The*

SERVING THE HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED: A MORAL AND ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

Nearly 60 percent of students in Tennessee's public schools are economically disadvantaged, and 35 percent are students of color.¹⁶⁷ Tennessee cannot reach its educational goals or meet its workforce needs as long as these students remain underserved by the state's public schools and dramatic gaps in achievement and college readiness persist. These discrepancies demand urgent action. Any delay will result in more students slipping through the cracks of the education system, cut off from the opportunities and support they need for a successful future, and inhibit Tennessee's progress.

Tennessee Department of Education should continue to provide districts with sample assessment schedules and other guidance on best practices in the implementation of technology-based assessments. The department's Scheduling and Logistics Task Force can support districts by sharing sample schedules, providing guidance on logistics, analyzing current issues and providing ongoing feedback. After the first year of implementation of TNReady, the Tennessee Department of Education should ensure results from technology-based assessments are valid and reliable measures of student learning.

- **Improving Transparency with the TNReady Assessment.** *The Tennessee Department of Education should commit to improved transparency with the TNReady assessment by providing educators and parents with a larger sample of test items after test administration.* To improve the usefulness of data from TNReady, the department should prepare to release additional test items after TNReady is administered in 2016-17. These additional test items will allow educators to better use results from TNReady to improve their instruction and will allow students and families to better identify opportunities for growth in the coming year.

Provide Educator Support. *The Tennessee Department of Education and local school districts*

should provide educators with professional learning opportunities that will help them prepare students for success on the TNReady assessment. CORE offices and local school districts should provide professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders that provide them with resources to develop high-quality assessments for their schools and classrooms. After the first year of implementation of TNReady, the Tennessee Department of Education should continue to provide professional learning opportunities to educators on the new assessment. These professional learning opportunities should focus on how to prepare students for success on the new assessment and how to use data from the assessment to drive shifts in instruction. As Tennessee transitions to a new assessment system, educators must have common definitions of different types of assessment and have the support they need to develop high-quality assessments for implementation in their classrooms. During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, educators emphasized that they use data from classroom assessments and local interim assessments to make in-time decisions about their instruction. For this reason, it is important to ensure they have the support they need to develop high-quality assessments that provide accurate feedback on student learning.

Implement High-Quality Interim Assessments. CORE Offices should provide districts with resources and guidance to ensure they select and implement interim assessments that are high-quality and aligned to

Tennessee's State Standards. Interim assessments, sometimes called benchmark assessments, take place between formative and summative assessments. Interim assessments aim to evaluate students' progress toward mastery on a set of specific academic goals or standards and are designed to provide results that inform decisions at the classroom, school, or district level.¹⁵⁹ During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, teachers, principals, and district leaders requested additional guidance and support on the selection of high-quality interim assessments. With the transition to TNReady, CORE Offices should provide local districts and schools with additional guidance on the selection and implementation of high-quality, aligned interim assessments.¹⁶⁰

ENSURE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS.

Develop and implement programs and policies that will yield improved academic outcomes for students of color and students living in poverty. These policies and programs should narrow and eventually eliminate persistent achievement gaps in Tennessee. While achievement gaps between students of color and white students as well as between

economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students has narrowed over the past several years, achievement gaps between these groups

persist at alarming rates.¹⁶¹ In grades 3-8 this year, nearly 35,000 of the 450,000 students (8 percent) tested below basic in both math and English language arts. All but 2,000 of these students fall into one of our four historically underserved subgroups.¹⁶² Those groups include students who are economically disadvantaged, from African American, Hispanic, or Native American backgrounds, English language learners, and those with disabilities. Tennessee faces a moral and economic imperative to provide all students access to high-quality education regardless of their race or zip code. In order for Tennessee to reach its goal of preparing all students for success in college and career and increasing the overall number of students with college degrees, education partners across the state must place priority on supporting academic growth for students of color and students living in poverty. A sense of urgency must pervade these efforts. This work will require consistent and specific supports at the state and local levels that aim to reach historically underserved populations in Tennessee schools.

Recruit and Retain Highly Effective Teachers in High-Need Schools. *Local foundations, communities, and business partners should provide local school districts with funding that can be used to attract and retain high-quality teachers in high-need schools. Teacher turnover occurs at high rates, particularly in schools serving large populations of students living in poverty, students of color, and low-achieving students.¹⁶³*

A recent evaluation of Governor Haslam's recruitment and retention bonus program for highly effective teachers in priority schools found that Level 5 rated teachers who were offered a \$5,000 bonus



to stay in high-need schools were 20 percent more likely to stay than teachers who were not eligible for the bonus.¹⁶⁴ Based on evidence from Tennessee and other states, investing in efforts to retain high-quality teachers in high-need schools could contribute to improving student outcomes for Tennessee's high-need student populations.

Reflect the Diversity of Tennessee's Student Body in Tennessee's Teacher Pipeline. Tennessee's teacher preparation programs should work together to develop programs that incentivize students of color and students who are economically disadvantaged to pursue careers in education. Research has found a growing mismatch between the representation of students of color and teachers of color in public schools.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, education research has found that students of color have higher academic outcomes when they have relationships with and receive instruction from teachers sharing similar backgrounds. For this reason, districts must recruit and retain teachers of color in Tennessee's schools, especially in schools and districts where there are larger populations of students of color. Tennessee's teacher preparation programs should collaborate to create innovative programs that focus on recruiting and preparing students of color for careers in education. The state may also consider ways to incorporate measures of accountability for teacher preparation programs for producing teacher candidate pools that

are representative of the state's need for a more diverse teaching population.

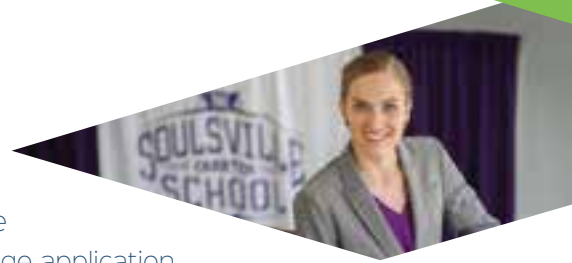
Radically Improve College Readiness Rates for Historically Underserved Populations. School districts should develop and implement strategies that will improve college readiness rates for students of color and students living in poverty. In 2015, 9 percent of African American students and 21 percent of Hispanic students met three or more college readiness benchmarks on the ACT, compared to 38 percent of white students.¹⁶⁸ If Tennessee intends to reach its goal of preparing all students for success in college and career, it must place specific focus on supporting students of color and students living in poverty on their path to college readiness. SCORE should identify schools and school districts that have successfully increased the percentage of students of color and students living in poverty graduating from high school prepared for college and determine what practices contributed to that success. These schools and districts should then share these strategies with districts and schools facing similar challenges.



PREPARING ALL STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS AT THE SOULSVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL

At The Soulsville Charter School in Memphis, winner of the 2015 SCORE Prize for high schools, the goal is to provide 100 percent of students the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary education. The journey to postsecondary at Soulsville doesn't just start with the college application process. Students participate in seminar classes both junior and senior years and work with faculty mentors and the dedicated four-person college and career counseling staff to plan their paths after high school. Each summer students are engaged in individualized enrichment opportunities including college programs, internships, and academic camps. Students work with their mentors throughout the second semester to find and plan their own summer enrichment opportunities based on their goals and interests.

In their senior year, all Soulsville students complete applications to at least one postsecondary institution. Students are encouraged to apply to multiple institutions and various types of institutions. Nearly all Soulsville students are accepted to multiple institutions. The school's college and career counseling team works with each student individually to determine what type of opportunity, from a four-year college to a technical program, best fits that student's goals and skills. Once students have matriculated, an alumni liaison works to connect them with colleagues and services at their institution to help them thrive in a new environment.



Implement Innovative Solutions that Yield Sustained Academic Growth for Historically Underserved Populations. SCORE should convene leading education partners across regions of the state to develop a statewide strategy that will improve academic outcomes and college readiness for students of color and students living in poverty. As Tennessee continues its Drive to 55 initiative, efforts to improve academic outcomes across the state must yield equitable improvements for all students. As the state's education system serves a majority of

students living in poverty and a growing percentage of students of color, Tennessee must focus its efforts on improving education outcomes for students who have been historically disadvantaged by the education system. This year, SCORE should convene regional sessions for education partners from across the state to collaborate and spark innovation on solutions that will yield sustained academic growth for students of color and students living in poverty. These solutions should focus not only on in-school factors, but also on out-of-school factors.

SERVICES THAT GET STUDENTS READY TO LEARN IN DYERSBURG CITY SCHOOLS AND JOHNSON CITY SCHOOLS

Increasing achievement for students of color and students living in poverty requires both excellent teaching and careful attention to other factors that might be preventing a student from reaching their maximum potential. Sometimes, this is as simple as a policy change that encourages providing all students access to more challenging course work. Often, students also need access to mental health, health care, and other services. Two SCORE Prize district finalists are working to address these needs.

Dyersburg City Schools addresses issues of inequity in advanced course-taking patterns by starting in the early grades and providing multiple paths throughout a student's career. All second-grade students in Dyersburg City are screened for gifted programs, thus removing barriers associated with an application process. If students do not directly test into gifted, they are offered opportunities at every interim assessment to test into a particular gifted course in the Dyersburg "Plus One" program. If students score at a high level on math, they can participate in math enrichment, and the same for other subjects. These types of strategies work to remove as many barriers as possible for students to be challenged to a higher level.

Johnson City Schools provides an extensive mental health program in schools to address needs that students might have and to ease the caseload of school counselors and teachers. Through the HEROES program, Johnson City provides each school with a social worker and case manager who offer mental health screenings and services at the school rather than requiring students and parents to be referred to services outside of the school. Teachers cite the program as a service that both frees up class time and helps to get students ready to learn.

In Dyersburg City, an innovative program working to train emotional support dogs both at their alternative school and neighborhood schools provides an outlet for students and teachers who need some extra care. Students with emotional needs spend time both training the dogs and receiving love and support. Neel Durbin, superintendent of Dyersburg City Schools, says that teachers request time with the support animals for their students and for themselves. The extra emotional support allows teachers and students alike to be more prepared for learning in the classroom.



EMPOWER TENNESSEE'S TEACHERS.

Cultivate a culture of teaching in Tennessee that attracts high-quality candidates to the profession and supports the continual growth of Tennessee's current teachers. As noted earlier, research indicates that teachers have a larger impact on student learning than any other in-school factor. For this reason, it is important to recruit high-quality candidates to the teaching profession and to expand access to effective teacher preparation programs that give candidates the skills they need to effectively improve student learning. It is also essential to support current teachers, providing them with support, recognition, and leadership opportunities that will allow them to continually improve their instruction and more effectively meet student needs. Early-career teachers should also have increased support through professional development for teaching literacy in all content areas—a key strategy to enhance reading levels.

Elevate Teacher Voice. *SCORE, the Tennessee Department of Education, and non-profit organizations should establish and expand*

opportunities for educators to guide and provide feedback on policies affecting their schools and districts. SCORE should convene a statewide network of teacher leaders to increase opportunities for collaboration between teacher leaders across the state and increase the capacity of current teacher leader programs. Over the past several years, there has been an increase in opportunities for educators to have a voice in the policymaking process as a result of efforts by the Tennessee Department of Education, local school districts, advocacy organizations, and other education partners across the state. These opportunities have allowed more educators to advocate for changes that reflect the needs in their classrooms and schools. To enhance the impact of these opportunities, SCORE should create a statewide network of teacher leaders, creating additional opportunities for collaboration and additional outlets for teacher leadership in Tennessee.

Ensure the Continued Improvement of Tennessee's Teacher Preparation Programs. *The State Board of Education, the Tennessee Department of Education, and teacher preparation programs should continue to implement Tennessee's Educator Preparation Policy with fidelity to ensure continued improvement in Tennessee's teacher preparation programs. The Tennessee Department of Education should publish*

a report at the end of year one of implementation of the Educator Preparation Policy highlighting key milestones, successes and challenges, and priorities for the following year. To further improve the quality of teaching across the state, the State Board of Education should also consider increasing the cut-score on the PRAXIS and content-area exams required to qualify for a Tennessee teacher license. The State Board of Education took an important step in 2014 by adopting the Educator Preparation Policy, laying the foundation for increased rigor in Tennessee's teacher preparation programs. As the Tennessee Department

of Education, the State Board of Education, and teacher preparation programs begin implementing the Educator Preparation Policy, the policy must be implemented with fidelity and yield real improvements in educator preparation across the state. The State Board of Education's efforts to redesign the teacher preparation report card should result in a report that provides prospective educators, local school districts, and policymakers with actionable, user-friendly data on the state of teacher preparation programs in Tennessee.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING TEACHERS IN TROUSDALE COUNTY

Recruiting and retaining teachers in Trousdale County, winner of the 2015 District SCORE Prize, is one part of an overall system of educator development and support. Trousdale County retains more teachers with the highest scores on their teacher evaluation rubric than most districts in the state of Tennessee. Because Trousdale County starting teacher salaries are not as competitive as nearby school systems, the system has intentionally focused on how to grow excellent teachers and retain them over time.

Trousdale's system of support and development seeks to recruit high-quality teachers from all over Tennessee and nationally, place them where they will be most effective, provide them with individualized professional development, and reward them through compensation and growth opportunities such as teacher leadership roles. Teacher-student assignment in Trousdale County is designed to set teachers up for success based on previous student achievement data. The school system uses TVAAS data annually to assign students to teachers based on the teachers' strengths and weaknesses. Students on a particular achievement level are assigned to teachers who have had success with students at that level. High-performing teachers then progress more quickly through the system's compensation structures and can end up earning more than they might in surrounding school systems. District leaders cite this intentional strategy as part of why Trousdale retains so many top-level teachers.



Improve Teacher Compensation in Tennessee.

Tennessee's leaders must deliver on their commitment to making Tennessee the fastest improving state in the nation in teacher pay. Currently, Tennessee ranks 40th compared to other states in average salary for instructional staff.¹⁶⁹ In order to recruit and retain high-quality teachers in Tennessee schools, Tennessee's leaders should deliver on their commitment to making

Tennessee the fastest improving state in the nation in teacher pay.

Expand Access to High-Quality Literacy Instruction.

The Tennessee Department of Education, with the support of CORE Offices, should scale up and improve state-level training on reading instruction for all teachers, with a focus on early grade teachers.



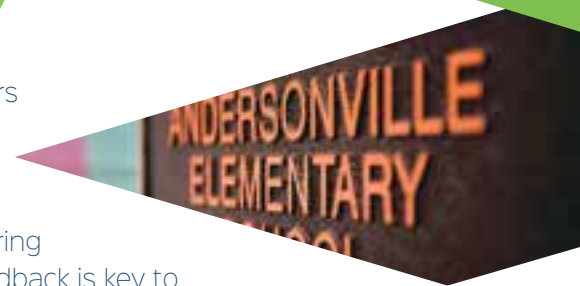


While Tennessee student achievement in math and science has shown continued growth over the past four years, student achievement in reading has remained stagnant and in some cases decreased.¹⁷⁰ The Tennessee Department of Education offered intensive reading instruction courses to Tennessee teachers over the past two years. These courses should be improved upon and expanded, allowing

Tennessee teachers to further improve their instruction in literacy, with a focus on expanding access to these courses for early grade teachers.

ENSURING TEACHER VOICE AT ANDERSONVILLE ELEMENTARY, DELANO OPTIONAL SCHOOL, AND DRESDEN ELEMENTARY

Across the state, schools and districts are working to engage teachers more substantially in decision-making. The school and district leaders of the three SCORE Prize elementary finalists have established specific routines to allow teachers a voice in developing and adjusting strategies and policies for teaching and learning. Ensuring that regular structures exist to engage teachers beyond informal feedback is key to incorporating feedback into planning.



In Anderson County, the school district altered its schedule, creating “Early Out Wednesdays,” to allow teachers time to collaborate and connect with school leaders to plan. Using this common planning time as well as common professional development that they requested, teachers at Andersonville Elementary have designed and led an initiative to build a growth mindset among their students. Based on research and their professional development, the teachers believe that working on the growth mindset will improve overall student achievement.

Teachers have leadership on academic and enrichment committees at Delano Optional School in Shelby County. These roles allow teachers the opportunity to help design and shape curriculum within and outside the school day. In addition, leadership roles for all teachers provide another way to ensure that teacher collaboration is frequent across all grades and subjects including enrichment programs such as music, art, and technology. Teachers at Delano cite this shared leadership and collaboration as key to their overall success.

At Dresden Elementary in Weakley County, school leaders seek input from teachers through a monthly faculty advisory council. These meetings occur in addition to regular weekly teacher planning meetings. Based on faculty input from the advisory council, school leaders have made changes to school schedules and structure. Teachers report feeling respected and know that their suggestions are regularly heard.



INVEST IN TENNESSEE'S SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS.

Build and expand the leadership pipeline in Tennessee, providing school and district leaders the preparation and support they need to effectively meet the needs of their students and teachers. Research has found that of all in-school factors, a principal's impact on student outcomes is second only to that of teachers.¹⁷¹ Even so, recent research has found that state policymakers give more attention to teachers and teacher-related issues than to principals.¹⁷² This pattern of investment holds true in Tennessee. While teachers are the single most influential in-school factor in student success, principals are responsible for building positive school cultures, supporting teachers and teaching, and ensuring that state initiatives succeed at the school and classroom levels.¹⁷³ For this reason, Tennessee must increase its investment in school and district leadership across the state.

Create High-Quality Professional Learning Opportunities for Tennessee's Principals. *The Tennessee Department of Education should expand access to leadership courses that provide incoming and current principals with critical skillsets in instructional leadership and building management.* During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, principals consistently offered positive feedback on the state's leadership courses, noting that these professional learning opportunities provided them with important skills and information relevant to leading their teachers and schools.¹⁷⁴ The Tennessee Department of Education should expand these leadership courses to cover more topics and to provide more principals with access to these critical opportunities. Additionally, CORE Offices should work to create networks of support for principals, establishing

opportunities for principals in CORE regions to collaborate with one another and serve as mentors for younger principals in their regions.

Create Effective Systems of Support for Aspiring, New, and Current Principals. *The Tennessee Department of Education should create an advisory council to inform the process of improving principal preparation in Tennessee. Additionally, SCORE and the Tennessee Department of Education should work together to build regional school leadership hubs that provide school leaders with regional networks of support.* While the State Board of Education recently passed a new Educator Preparation Policy to increase the rigor of Tennessee's educator preparation programs, the state has not invested parallel efforts in improving the rigor of its principal preparation programs. To better understand the state of principal preparation in Tennessee, the Tennessee Department of Education should create an advisory council to inform improvements in Tennessee's principal pipeline. This advisory council should ensure that shifts in policy and practice around Tennessee's principal pipeline result in expanded access to high-quality principal preparation programs. High-quality programs should not only provide aspiring principals with high-quality instruction and clinical experiences while they are in the program, but should also provide graduates with mentorship in their first two to three years as principals. Additionally, regional leadership hubs should be established to support aspiring principals, new principals, and veteran principals in their efforts to transform instruction in schools across the state. SCORE's collaboration with the department can also focus on supporting and actively seeking philanthropic and other funding opportunities to increase regional hub support to lower financial barriers for aspiring school leaders.

Strengthen the Principal Evaluation System.

The Tennessee Department of Education should continue to support district leaders in the improved implementation of principal evaluation, providing them with the resources they need to effectively build principals' instructional leadership skills. During SCORE's 2015 Listening Tour, many principals provided positive feedback on their experience with principal evaluation, noting that they had meaningful conversations with their evaluators, allowing them to reflect more intentionally on their practice. Even so, principals also noted areas for improvement in the implementation of the principal evaluation, indicating a need for more follow-up support and access to additional professional learning opportunities after the evaluation.¹⁷⁵ In year two of implementation, district leaders must have access to high-quality professional learning opportunities that lead to improved feedback and support for principals. These professional learning opportunities should focus on evidence-based strategies to improve instruction and student learning in their schools.

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION.

Local communities and businesses should deepen their investment in Tennessee education, providing districts and schools with additional resources and support that will accelerate improved student learning across the state. In order for Tennessee to reach its goal of ensuring all students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce, community and business partners across the state must expand their investments in Tennessee's schools. Families, foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and community groups across the state must engage and leverage their resources and skills to meet the needs of all Tennessee students, whether through internship and youth apprenticeship opportunities, after-school programs,



contributing technology to classrooms, or providing wraparound support to students.

Expand Access to Youth Apprenticeships and Internships. *The Tennessee Department of Education, Department of Economic and Community Development, Department of Labor, and the Tennessee Business Roundtable should work together to establish and expand opportunities for students to participate in apprenticeships with local businesses throughout high school. Youth apprenticeships and internships allow students to gain real work*

experience before graduating from high school. These experiences provide students with insight into different career paths they could pursue and allow them to develop critical skillsets that will make them competitive candidates in the workforce. For these reasons, the Tennessee Business Roundtable and local chambers of commerce should work with the Tennessee Department of Education and other agencies to expand student access to youth apprenticeships and internship opportunities at local Tennessee businesses. SCORE stands ready to support these efforts.

INTERNSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS AT MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. MAGNET SCHOOL

At Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet School (MLK) in Nashville, a two-time SCORE Prize finalist, students have a variety of opportunities to engage in internships and apprenticeships. Like many high schools around the state, MLK has strong relationships with local colleges and universities. MLK has used those relationships not only to engage students in dual enrollment opportunities, but also work opportunities.

MLK has intentionally developed internship programs with both Vanderbilt University and Tennessee State University to not only provide students with real-life work experience while in high school, but also on-campus exposure to postsecondary institutions. Internship opportunities are designed to match with the STEM focus at MLK. Students can work with leading experts in Biomedical Informatics at Vanderbilt as well as Agriculture and Engineering at Tennessee State. MLK is looking to expand the program to other local colleges and universities as well.



Provide Children with High-Quality Early Literacy Instruction. *Early education providers, families, and community organizations should work together to ensure children have access to high-quality early learning experiences that allow them to enter kindergarten with the foundation they need to succeed in reading. As Tennessee implements innovative programs to improve student outcomes in reading, students must enter kindergarten with the language skills they need to learn to read. Early childhood providers, families, and community*

organizations must provide children with high-quality early education experiences, both at home and in school, to help them develop a strong foundation for reading when they start school.

Incentivize Students to Pursue Degrees and Certifications in High-Need Employment Areas. *The Tennessee Business Roundtable should work with businesses across the state to develop scholarship opportunities for students pursuing careers in high-need employment areas. As noted earlier, several*



industries across Tennessee are reporting workforce skills gaps. To ensure these gaps can be filled with highly qualified individuals, Tennessee businesses and education partners must work together to incentivize

students to pursue degrees and certifications in industries with significant skills gaps. In addition, Tennessee businesses should work with education partners to ensure school curricula aligns with the skills students need to succeed in the workforce.

LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

This report details many areas of progress to celebrate in Tennessee public education, as well as remaining hurdles the state must cross to ensure all students complete high school ready for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Achieving the imperatives outlined in this report requires setting, committing to, and providing students and teachers the support they need to meet and exceed high expectations. The efforts underway from Mountain City to Memphis aimed at keeping Tennessee on its present path of improving student outcomes require a shared sense of urgency to implement innovations we know empower students to succeed.

As achievement levels rise, they must rise for students from all backgrounds, but they must rise particularly in communities and for populations too long underserved by public schools in Tennessee. Leadership of teachers, principals, superintendents, and policymakers at the state and local levels must complement engagement in education from parents, businesses, and philanthropic organizations. Tennessee has made evident and needed progress over the past five years. The test of that progress will come in our commitment to continue leading for the future of all of our state's students.



A CONSOLIDATED COMMUNITY SUPPORT STRATEGY IN DYERSBURG CITY SCHOOLS

Strong community and business support provides schools with needed resources including support for extracurricular programs, opportunities for internships, and wraparound services for students. Often though, community partners may be asked multiple times per year and by different schools for varied support. After being approached by community partners to help streamline the process, Dyersburg City Schools decided to consolidate requests of partners to once per year for the entire school district.

The result was a significant increase in the amount of overall monetary support for Dyersburg schools and a happy group of partners. Schools can and do still engage partners in volunteer opportunities and other programs, but do not approach partners for additional funds. The funds collected through this new fundraising process are distributed as with any other portion of the Dyersburg City Schools budget, through a collective planning process that includes board members, school leaders, and teachers.





SCORE CARD



FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

Upon the release of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results in 2013, Tennessee had achieved the goal of becoming the fastest improving state in the country. This year, NAEP results showed that the gains made between 2011 and 2013 were sustained. Broadly, Tennessee students are performing at higher levels on rigorous assessments, and their preparation to meet high standards provides the foundation for that achievement. Still, too many students in our state continue to graduate from high school without the content mastery and skills they need to succeed in college and their careers. Too many of our state's young students struggle to gain essential literacy skills. Only 9 percent of African American students in Tennessee score at college-ready benchmarks across at least three of the four ACT subject areas. This seventh edition of SCORE's *State of Education in Tennessee* report presents an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in recent years across the state and to reinvigorate commitment to building on gains from the last five years and ensuring future gains are made equitably by students statewide.

While achievement has improved throughout the state, much of this rapid growth has resulted from the efforts of several districts with exceptional gains. These districts demonstrate that regardless of baseline levels of achievement, the diligent efforts of educators, schools, and districts can lead to significant academic improvement for students.

Since 2011, many districts across the state have made impressive gains in the percentage of students scoring at proficient and advanced levels on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments. A few districts in particular showed outstanding growth in both math and reading. Trousdale County, Lauderdale County, Chester County, and Huntingdon Special School District all posted over 20 percentage-point growth in students scoring proficient and advanced on the math portion of the test, and at least 5 percentage-point growth in reading.¹⁷⁶ Trousdale County Schools also won the 2013 and 2015 SCORE Prize in the district category.

At the secondary level between 2011 and 2015, Richard City Schools saw the highest ACT score growth in the state, with an improvement of 2.6 points while also increasing its graduation rate by nearly 14 percentage points. Tullahoma City, Pickett County, Dickson County, and Cheatham County Schools all saw an ACT increase of at least 1.6 points.

Tennessee has much to work on as it continues to improve its educational opportunities for students throughout the state. The growth over the past five years demonstrates what is possible when educators and policymakers come together to make student achievement a top priority. This focus must continue in the coming years as Tennessee works to become one of the leading states in the country in terms of educational outcomes.

DISTRICTS WITH THE LARGEST TCAP GRADES 3-8 MATH PROFICIENT/ADVANCED GROWTH, 2011-2015

	2011 Prof/Adv (%)	2015 Prof/Adv (%)	2011-2015 Growth (%)
Perry County	21.0	61.7	40.7
Richard City	29.1	59.3	30.2
Decatur County	30.0	59.7	29.7
Lauderdale County	24.3	53.7	29.4
Trousdale County	47.6	75.7	28.1
Chester County	40.3	67.2	26.9
Coffee County	31.7	58.3	26.6
Lincoln County	40.7	66.5	25.8
Sumner County	43.1	68.5	25.4
Huntingdon SSD	51.8	76.1	24.3

Students in other districts, however, have not made the kind of progress reflected by their peers elsewhere in Tennessee. TCAP math proficiency and advanced rates have increased by less than five percentage points or even declined, for example, in at least ten districts between 2011 and 2015.

In reading/language arts, districts have made real gains in the percentage of students scoring as proficient and advanced on the grades 3-8 TCAP exams, although those gains have not been as dramatic as in math. Since 2011, Bells City has led the way with a nearly 20 percentage-point increase in students scoring proficient or advanced. Trousdale County and Huntingdon Special School District also have made double-digits gains over this period in reading/language arts proficiency—as they have in math.

DISTRICTS WITH THE LARGEST TCAP GRADES 3-8 READING/LANGUAGE ARTS PROFICIENT/ADVANCED GROWTH, 2011-2015

	2011 Prof/Adv (%)	2015 Prof/Adv (%)	2011-2015 Growth (%)
Bells City	41.4	60.8	19.4
Trousdale County	46.0	59.8	13.8
Huntingdon SSD	46.2	58.0	11.8
Moore County	45.4	54.3	8.9
Chester County	47.3	53.6	6.3
Dyer County	48.5	54.7	6.2
Haywood County	27.8	33.9	6.1
Paris SSD	46.8	52.3	5.5
Lauderdale County	35.0	40.5	5.5
Cannon County	39.9	45.1	5.2

Reflecting the state's ongoing need to better equip students with early grades literacy skills, lower percentages of students now score proficient or advanced on the grades 3-8 reading/language arts TCAP in some districts than in 2011. Three districts have experienced double-digit declines on this measure: Hollow Rock-Bruceton (-14 percentage points), Etowah City (-12 percentage points), and Pickett County (-11.5 percentage points). These declines reaffirm the imperative to enhance literacy proficiency in the coming year and years.

Graduation rates have also risen notably in recent years, with the statewide graduation rate reaching 87.8 percent in 2015 compared to 85.5 percent in 2011. As the state's graduation rate has risen, so too have rates in many districts across Tennessee. Union County has led the way in graduation rate growth over the past five years, while other districts have made substantial gains meriting recognition.

TOP TEN DISTRICTS IN GRADUATION RATE GROWTH, 2011-2015

	2011 Graduation Rate (%)	2015 Graduation Rate (%)	2011-2015 Growth (%)
Union County	72	92	20
Lauderdale County	85	99	14
Richard City	79	93	14
Henry County	80	94	14
Roane County	78	92	14
Van Buren County	86	99	13
Bedford County	81	93	12
Hancock County	74	84	10
Humboldt City	77	86	9
Maury County	82	91	9



Several school districts with relatively high graduation rates in 2011 have experienced declining rates over recent years. Trenton Special School District and Sequatchie County Schools' graduation rates, for example, have declined by double digits from five years ago. In these and other districts with declining rates of students completing high school, focused efforts are needed to ensure more students earn the diplomas they need in order to pursue work or a postsecondary credential.

When students complete high school, they also need to have the skills to succeed in college-level coursework. In Tennessee, the ACT serves as an important indicator of college readiness across the state, as all eleventh-graders take the entrance exam. To qualify for the state's lottery scholarship program, students must earn a composite score of 21 or higher on the ACT's 36-point scale. Overall, the state average score has increased from 19.5 to 19.8 from 2011 to 2015. The national average over this period has fluctuated slightly between a low of 20.9 and high of 21.1. Several districts in Tennessee, however, have posted gains in ACT scores well above the state's average increase.

DISTRICTS WITH HIGHEST ACT COMPOSITE SCORES, 2015

2015 ACT Composite Score	
Germantown Municipal	24.1
Collierville	24.0
Williamson County	23.8
Oak Ridge City	23.1
Maryville City	23.0
Tullahoma City	22.4
Kingsport City	22.2

2015 ACT Composite Score	
Alcoa City	22.0
Johnson City	21.8
Dyersburg City	21.7
Elizabethton City	21.4
Bristol City	21.3
Dyer County	21.3
Greeneville City	21.3



TOP TEN TENNESSEE DISTRICTS IN ACT COMPOSITE SCORE GROWTH, 2011-2015

	2011 ACT Composite Score	2015 ACT Composite Score	2011-2015 Composite Score Increase
Richard City	17.5	20.1	2.6
Tullahoma City	20.2	22.4	2.2
Pickett County	17.8	19.7	1.9
Dickson County	19.3	21.0	1.7
Cheatham County	19.2	20.8	1.6
Union City	19.6	21.1	1.5
Dyersburg City	20.3	21.7	1.4
Johnson County	17.8	19.2	1.4
Dyer County	20.0	21.3	1.3
Hardeman County	16.5	17.7	1.2
Hawkins County	18.1	19.3	1.2
Sequatchie County	18.2	19.4	1.2

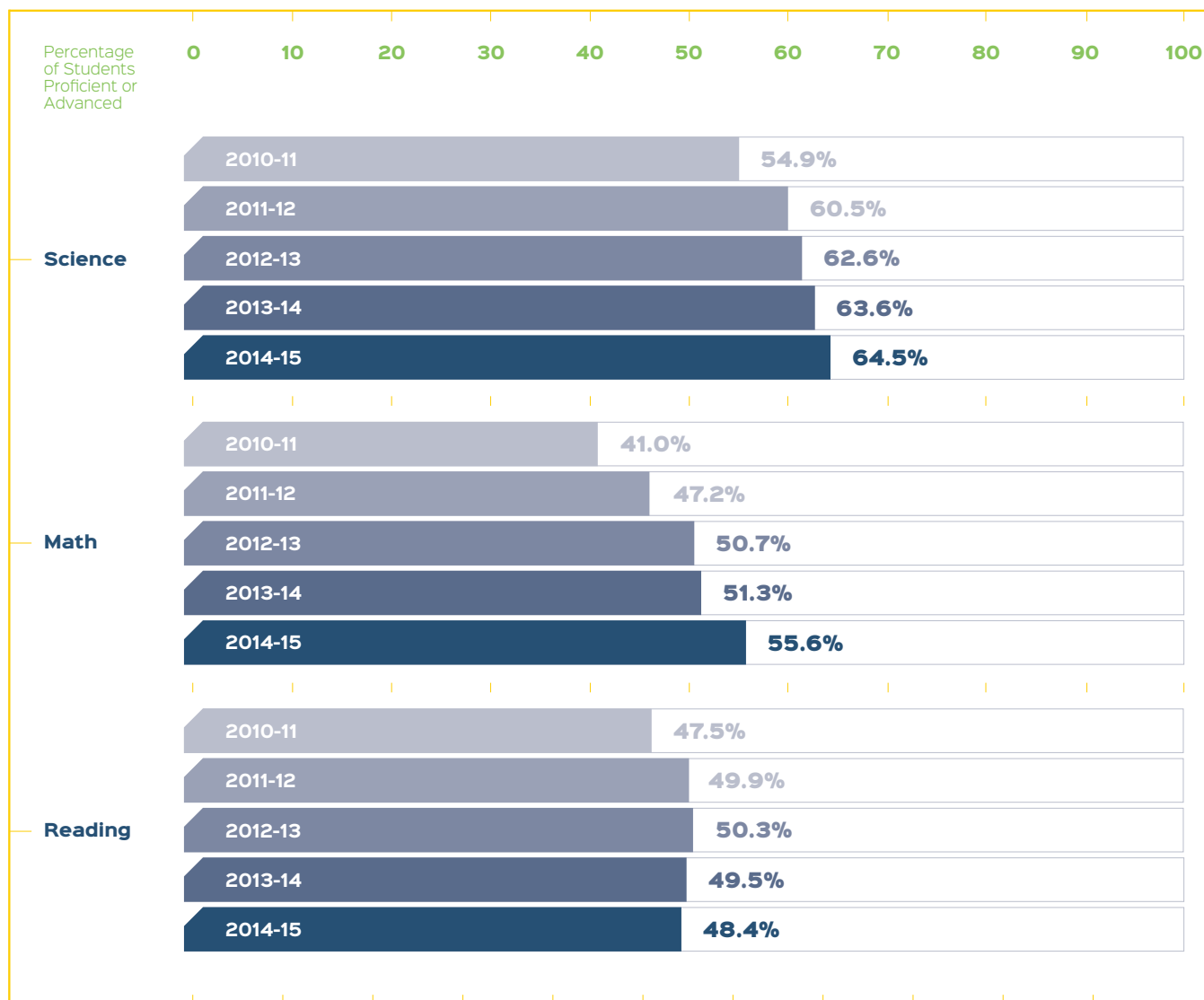
While ACT score increases in districts across the state represent encouraging indicators of enhanced college readiness, declining scores over the last five years in districts including Greeneville City (-1.6), Cleveland City (-1.8), and Lake County (-3.3) demonstrate the need for continued efforts to provide students rigorous courses and academic supports that prepare them for college-level work.

2014-15 STATE DATA

STATE ASSESSMENTS

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program encompasses subject-specific assessments for grades 3-8, as well as high school end-of-course exams. Compared to 2010, tens of thousands more students now achieve proficient or advanced levels in math and science on these exams compared to 2011. The following graphs illustrate the growth on state exams in math, reading, and science.

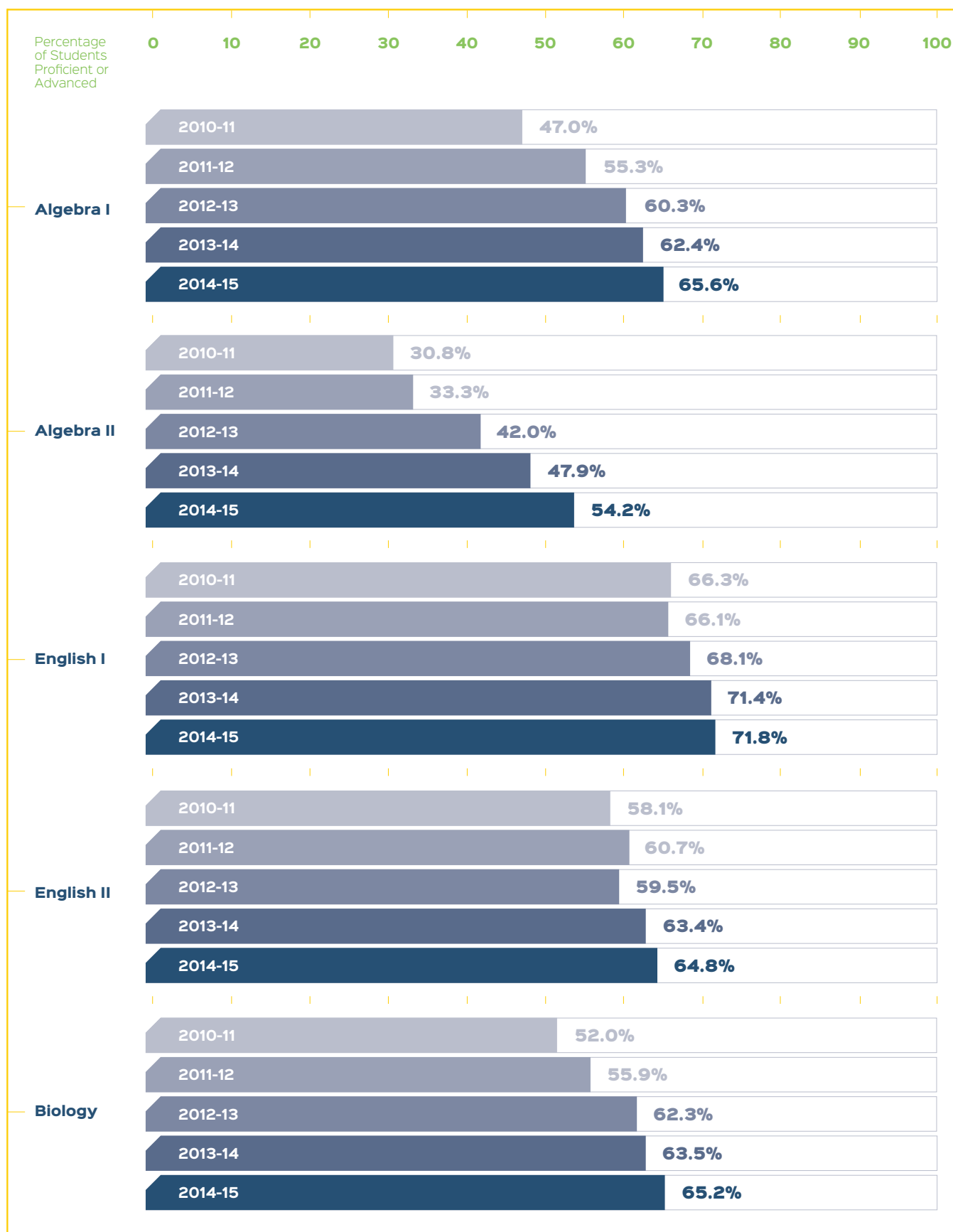
CONTINUED TCAP GROWTH





HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

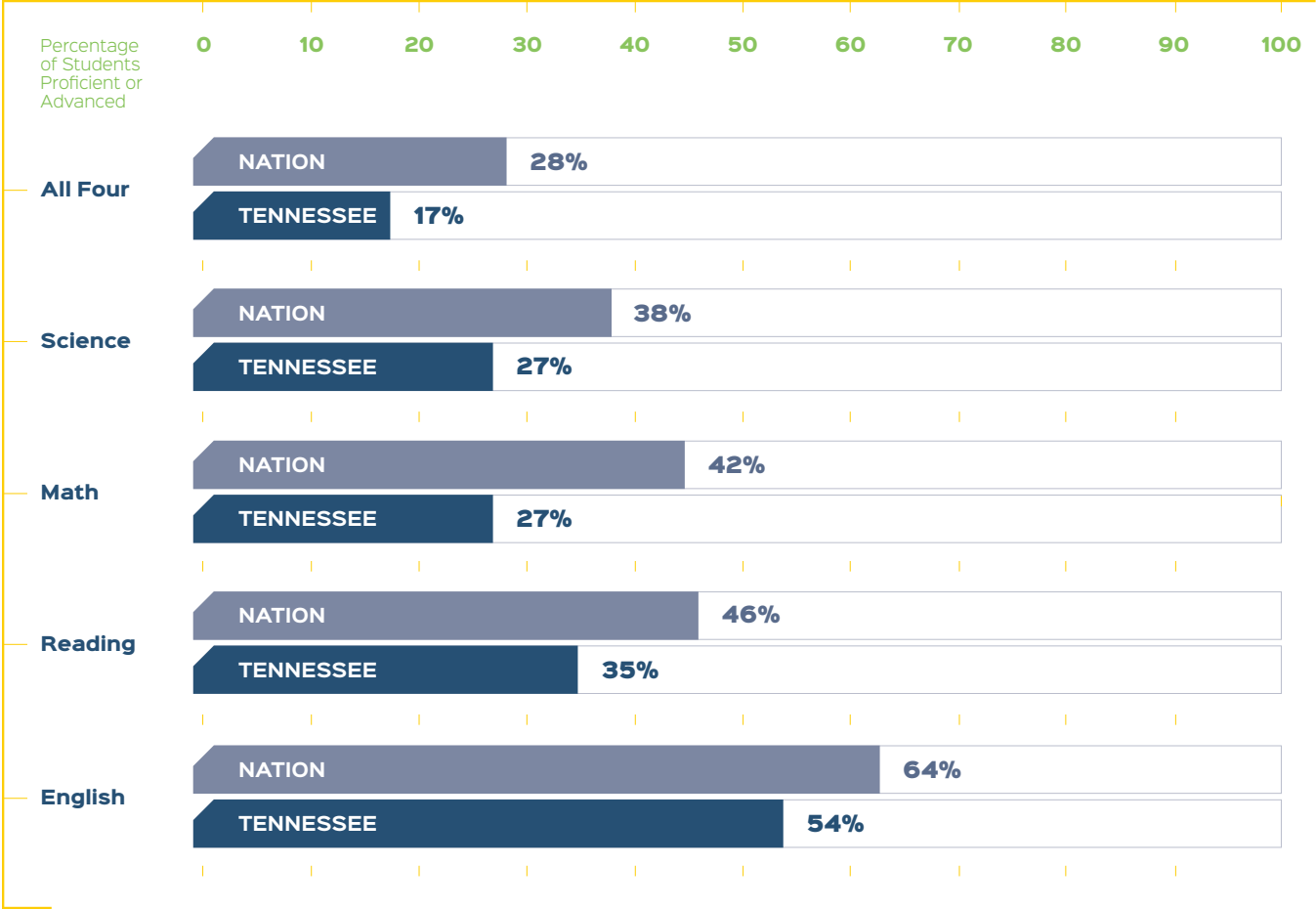
End-of-Course Results by Subject



COLLEGE READINESS EXAMS

Tennessee requires specific assessments to measure whether or not students are on track to graduate ready for college and career. The assessments include the ACT in the eleventh grade. Tennessee is one of thirteen states that now administer the ACT to every eleventh-grade student. Students meeting the ACT benchmark scores in English, reading, math, and science have an approximately 50 percent chance of earning a B or higher and an approximately 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in their corresponding college subject area courses. Since 2010, Tennessee has seen progress in terms of the percentage of students meeting the college readiness benchmarks. However, Tennessee high school juniors continue to score at college-ready levels below national averages and trail many other states with universal ACT administration. In 2015, only 17 percent of public high school test-takers met all four ACT benchmarks.¹⁷⁷ Among the 24 states in which more than 70 percent of high school students took the ACT in 2015, Tennessee's overall average composite score of 19.8 (on a scale of 36) ranked above only four.

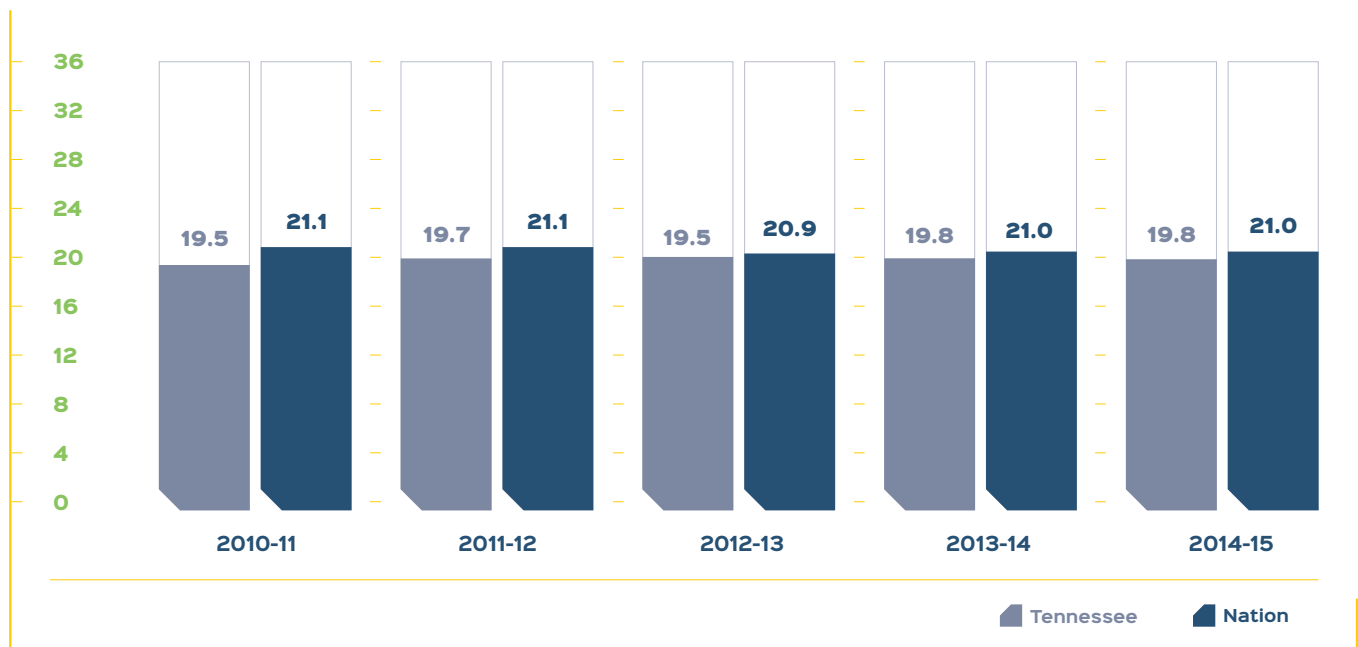
PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING COLLEGE READINESS BENCHMARKS



Since becoming a requirement in 2010, Tennessee's average ACT composite score has been below the national average. However, Tennessee's gains on the ACT composite between 2012-13 and 2013-14 were considered "noteworthy" by ACT officials.¹⁷⁸ Starting in 2012-13, ACT made two important changes. First, the college readiness benchmarks were altered in reading and science to more accurately reflect readiness for college-level coursework.

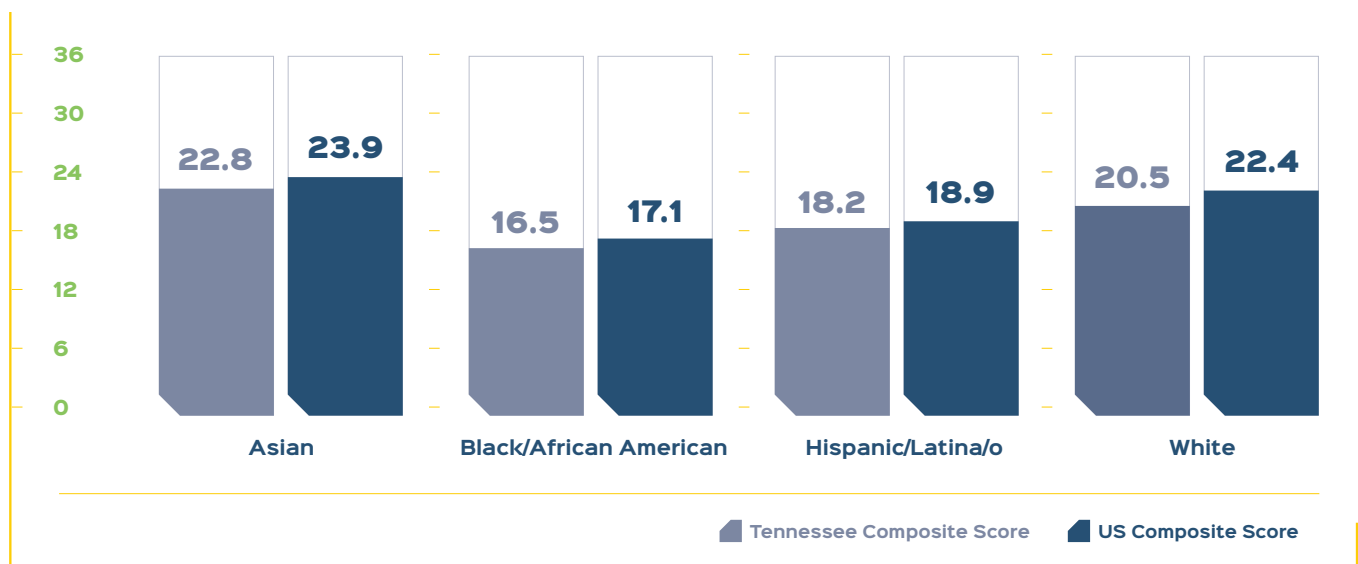
Second, ACT included the scores for all students who had extended time on the exam in reporting. These changes should be considered when examining ACT data over time.

ACT COMPOSITE SCORES, 2010-2015

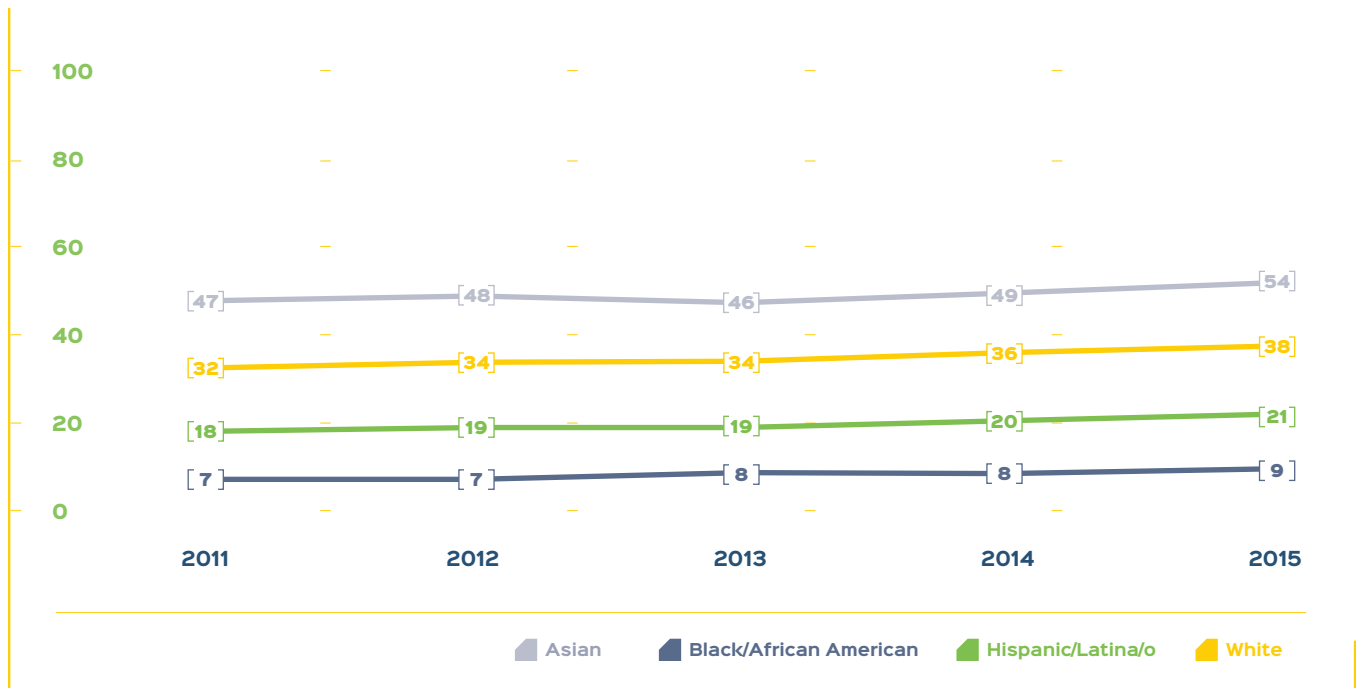


Although Tennessee must continue work to enhance the college readiness of all students, disaggregating ACT performance by racial and ethnic groups demonstrates the persistent readiness gaps between African American and Hispanic students and their white and Asian American peers. Six percent more white students scored at or above three or four subject area benchmarks on the 2015 ACT than on the 2011 ACT. That gain contrasts to the two percentage-point gain over that time for African American students.

ACT COMPOSITE SCORES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

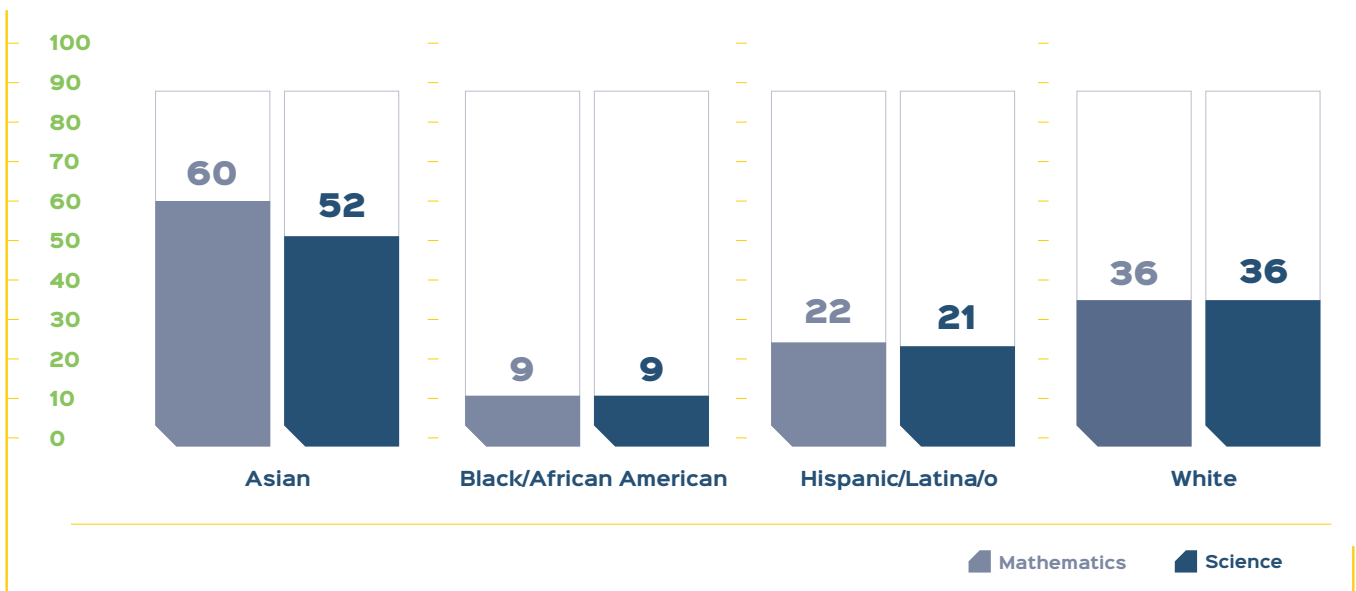


PERCENT OF 2011-15 TENNESSEE ACT-TESTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING THREE OR MORE COLLEGE-READY BENCHMARKS BY RACE/ETHNICITY



These disparities are also dramatically displayed by the percentages of students scoring at college-ready levels in math and science. While more than half of Asian and more than a third of white students met or exceeded benchmark scores for math and science in 2015, just one in five Hispanic and fewer than one in ten African American students did so.

TENNESSEE ACT-TESTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING COLLEGE-READY BENCHMARKS IN MATH AND SCIENCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2015



NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is currently the only consistent measure to compare student achievement in fourth and eighth grades across all states. In 2013, Tennessee students surpassed their peers across the country in overall gains on national math and reading tests, making Tennessee the fastest improving state in the nation, with only the District of Columbia having slightly greater overall gains. The charts below illustrate the gains on the biannual exam that Tennessee made between 2011 and 2015 in terms of both scores and the percent of students proficient or advanced by subject and grade. For the first time, this year Tennessee students scored in the top half of test-takers in grade 4 math. Students also continued NAEP gains in eighth-grade math and reading. In fourth-grade reading, however, Tennessee students fell five rankings, reflecting the state's ongoing need to address early grades literacy.

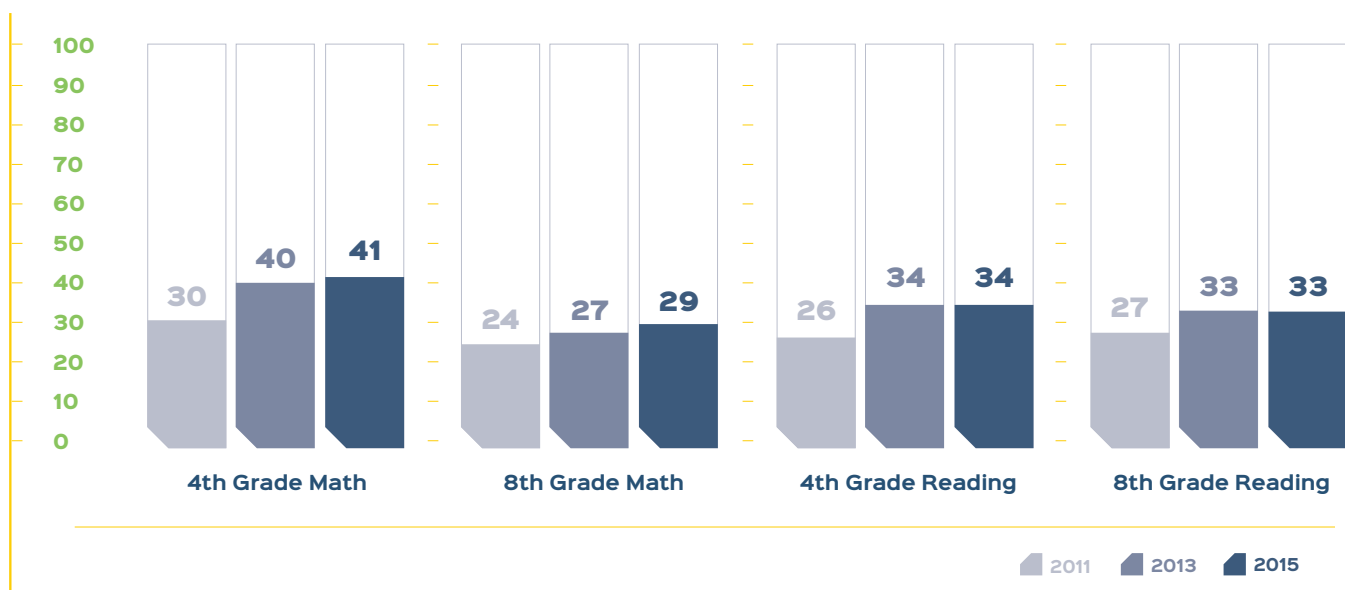
TENNESSEE'S NATIONAL RANKING ON THE NAEP

Math and Reading Exams, 2011-15

	Math		Reading	
	4th Grade	8th Grade	4th Grade	8th Grade
2011 Ranking	46th	45th	41st	41st
2013 Ranking	37th	43rd	31st	34th
2015 Ranking	25th	37th	36th	30th

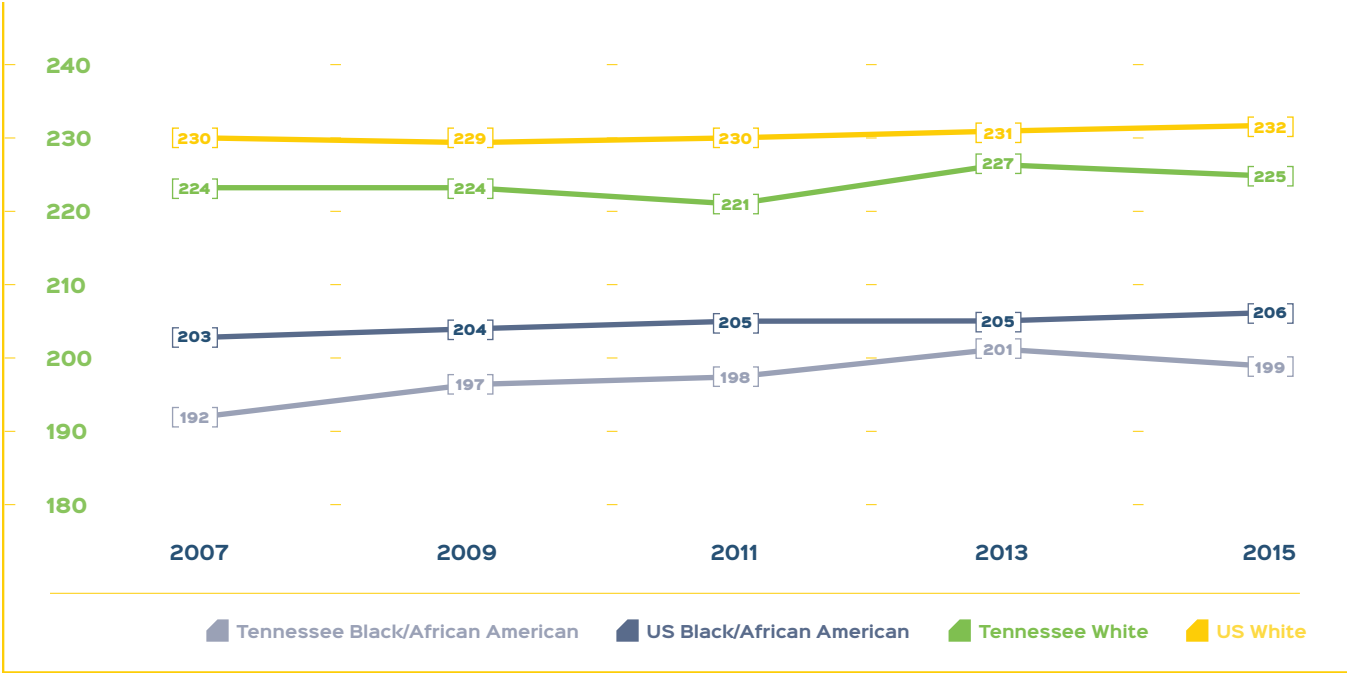
TENNESSEE NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES 2011-15

Percentages of Tennessee NAEP Test-Takers Scoring Proficient or Advanced by Subject Area

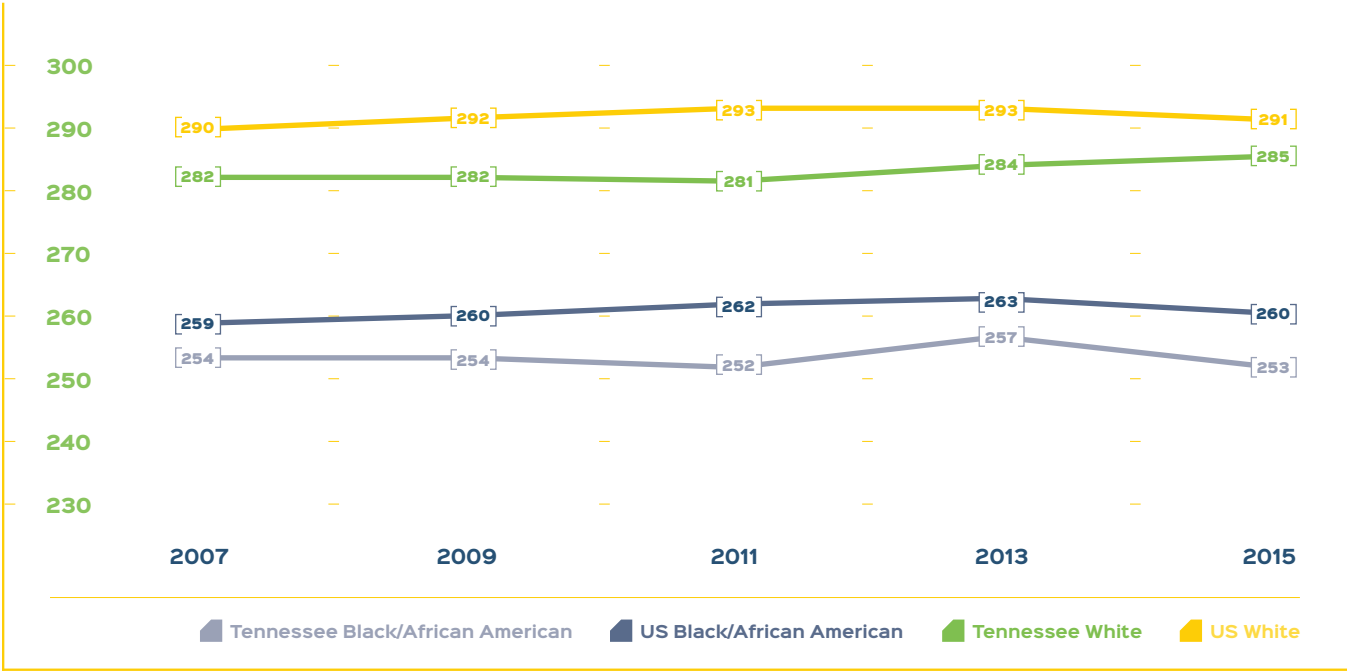


In 2015, Tennessee African American fourth-graders scored higher overall on the NAEP math exam than their African American peers nationally for the first time. However, the average African American score for fourth-grade math fell 20 points (on a 500-point scale) below the average score of white Tennessee fourth-graders and 22 points below that of white students nationally.

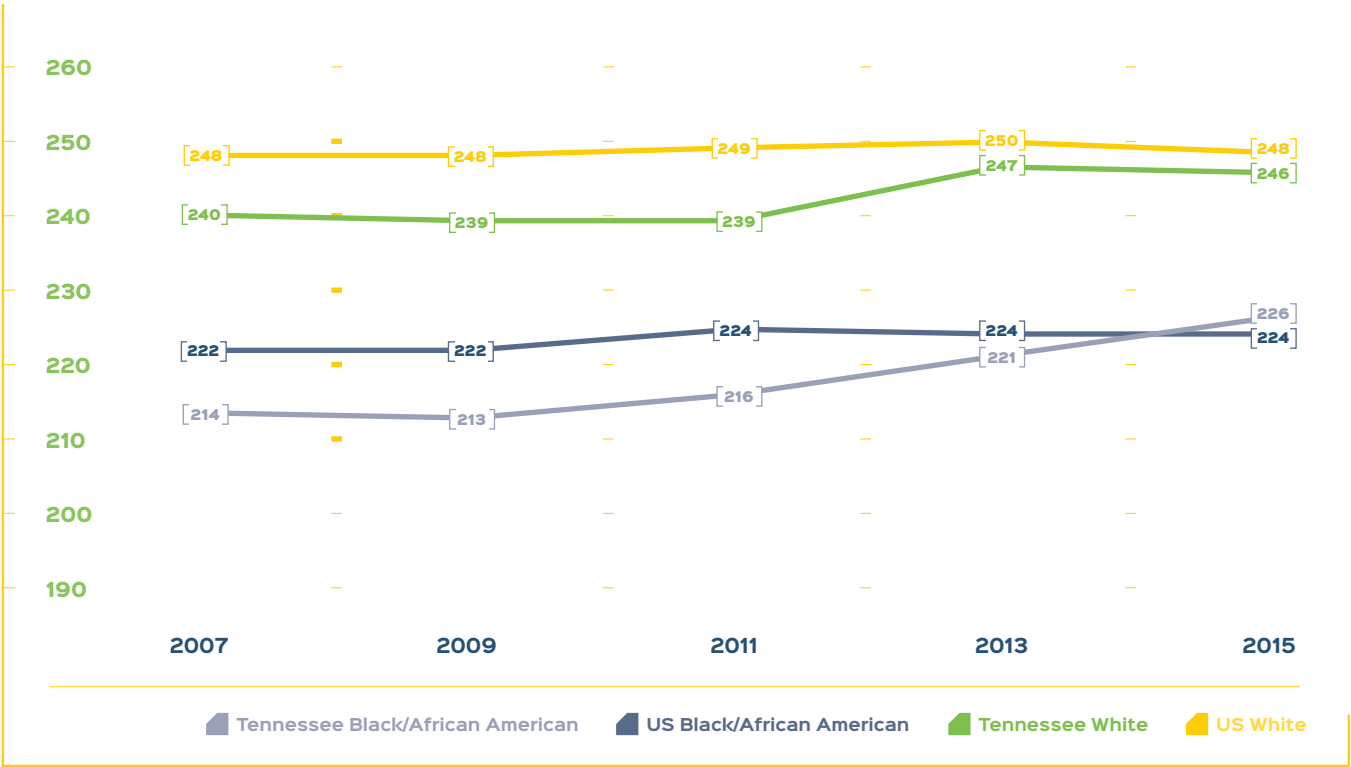
GRADE 4 READING SCORES RACIAL PERFORMANCE GAPS



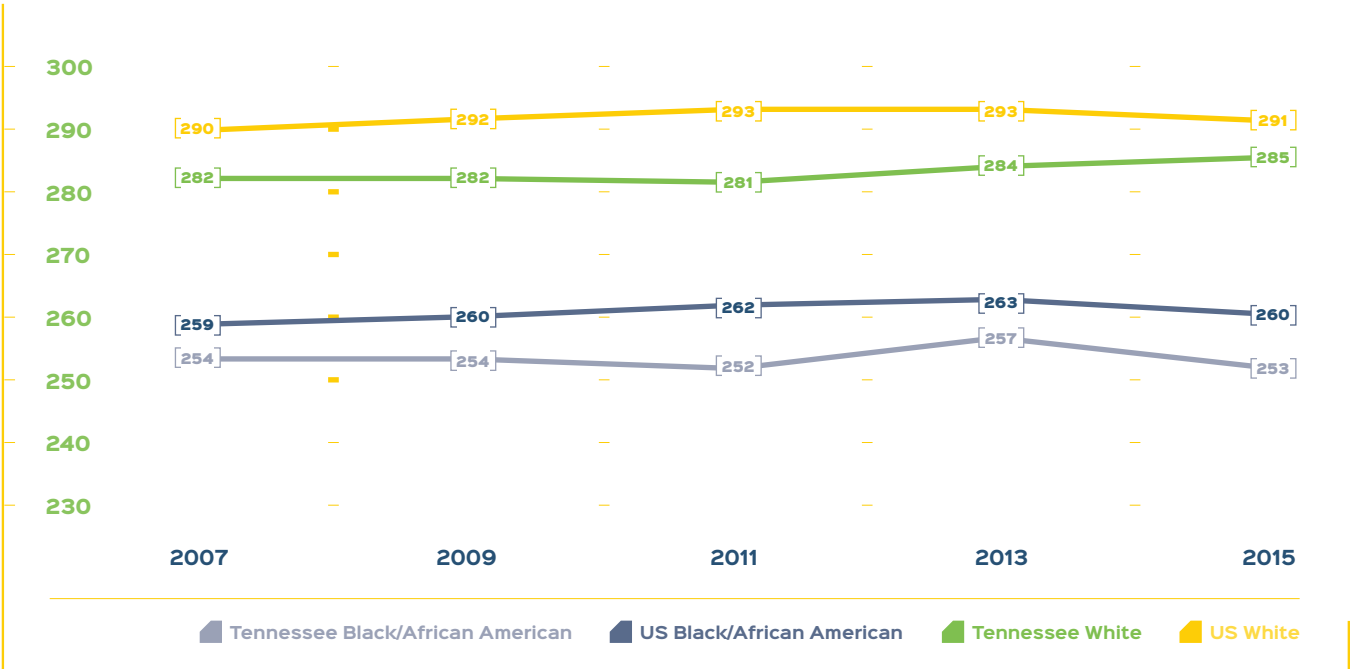
GRADE 8 READING SCORES RACIAL PERFORMANCE GAPS



GRADE 4 MATH SCORES RACIAL PERFORMANCE GAPS



GRADE 8 MATH SCORES RACIAL PERFORMANCE GAPS



SCORE CARD INDICATORS

The district data for each of the following indicators were obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education and apply to the 2014-15 school year.

District Characteristics

Number of Schools – The number of schools operating in each district for the 2014-15 school year

Enrollment – The total count of students enrolled in each individual school district as of October 1, 2014

Percent Black – The percent of enrolled students self-identified as Black or African-American

Percent Hispanic – The percent of enrolled students self-identified as Hispanic or Latina/o

Percent White – The percent of enrolled students self-identified as White

Percent ED – The percent of enrolled students identified as economically disadvantaged or eligible for free and reduced price lunch

Per Pupil Spending – The total current operating expenditures on a per pupil basis in each district from state, local, and federal sources

Percent Local Funding – The percent of district per pupil expenditures that comes from local revenue sources

- **Level 3: Average effectiveness** – schools whose students are making the same amount of progress as the Standards for Academic Growth
- **Level 2: Approaching average effectiveness** – schools whose students are making less progress than the Standards for Academic Growth
- **Level 1: Least effective** – schools whose students are making substantially less progress than the Standards for Academic Growth

Composite – The TVAAS Composite score shows growth at the district level based on student performance on statewide assessments across all available subjects and grades, and includes grades K-2 for districts that opted to test those students

Numeracy – The TVAAS Numeracy score is based on all available data in math

Literacy – The TVAAS Literacy score is based on all available data in reading/language arts

Tennessee Assessments

Percent Prof/Adv 3-8 Math – The percent of students in grades 3-8 who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2014-15 TCAP math assessments

Percent Prof/Adv 3-8 Reading – The percent of students in grades 3-8 who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2014-15 TCAP reading/language arts assessments

TVAAS – The scores based on growth for one year from the previous academic year. The Standard for Academic Growth is met when the student group makes one year's growth and maintains their relative achievement from one year to the next. Scores are provided on the following 1-5 scale:

- **Level 5: Most effective** – schools whose students are making substantially more progress than the Standards for Academic Growth
- **Level 4: Above average effectiveness** – schools whose students are making more progress than the Standards for Academic Growth

High School Success

EOC Algebra I – The percent of 9-12 grade students within the district who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2014-15 Algebra I EOC

EOC English II – The percent of 9-12 grade students within the district who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2014-15 English II EOC

EOC Biology I – The percent of 9-12 grade students within the district who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2014-15 Biology I EOC

ACT Composite – The average ACT composite score for the 2015 graduating class for all test-takers within a given district

Graduation Rate – The percent of students in each district who graduated from high school within four years and a summer out of those students that entered the ninth grade four years prior

ACT College Readiness – The percent of students in each district who met ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks across all four subject areas

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT HISPANIC	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT	24	7,138	97%	2%	2%	97%	\$12,804	4%
ALAMO CITY	1	657	12%	17%	71%	70%	\$8,669	11%
ALCOA CITY	3	1,943	23%	10%	65%	49%	\$10,320	53%
ALVIN C. YORK INSTITUTE	1	607	<0.5%	<0.5%	98%	62%	*	*
ANDERSON COUNTY	17	6,651	3%	1%	95%	59%	\$9,536	37%
ARLINGTON CITY	4	4,907	16%	5%	75%	14%	\$7,705	47%
ATHENS CITY	5	1,707	17%	8%	73%	74%	\$10,445	32%
BARTLETT CITY	11	8,529	28%	5%	63%	36%	\$8,858	45%
BEDFORD COUNTY	14	8,461	11%	21%	67%	70%	\$7,756	19%
BELLS CITY	1	410	16%	21%	62%	74%	\$8,818	12%
BENTON COUNTY	8	2,244	4%	2%	93%	50%	\$9,714	31%
BLED SOE COUNTY	5	1,932	2%	7%	91%	84%	\$9,496	15%
BLOUNT COUNTY	20	11,252	3%	4%	92%	54%	\$8,867	41%
BRADFORD SSD	2	537	6%	*%	93%	63%	\$10,144	25%
BRADLEY COUNTY	18	10,367	4%	4%	91%	55%	\$8,429	31%
BRISTOL CITY	8	4,176	6%	3%	89%	50%	\$9,830	53%
CAMPBELL COUNTY	14	5,775	*	1%	98%	71%	\$8,290	21%
CANNON COUNTY	7	2,088	2%	2%	95%	55%	\$8,402	20%
CARTER COUNTY	15	5,504	2%	2%	96%	77%	\$9,134	24%
CHEATHAM COUNTY	13	6,447	3%	4%	93%	49%	\$8,413	26%
CHESTER COUNTY	6	2,846	14%	3%	82%	40%	\$7,681	14%
CLAIBORNE COUNTY	13	4,543	2%	1%	96%	77%	\$9,283	25%
CLAY COUNTY	4	1,104	2%	2%	96%	71%	\$9,238	22%
CLEVELAND CITY	8	5,575	15%	19%	63%	70%	\$9,239	36%
CLINTON CITY	3	932	6%	3%	89%	63%	\$9,538	40%
COCKE COUNTY	12	4,710	4%	3%	93%	76%	\$9,247	23%
COFFEE COUNTY	10	4,575	3%	5%	91%	57%	\$9,068	37%
COLLIERVILLE CITY	8	7,939	18%	4%	67%	15%	\$8,383	51%
CROCKETT COUNTY	5	2,031	14%	14%	71%	62%	\$8,094	14%
CUMBERLAND COUNTY	12	7,482	1%	5%	93%	64%	\$8,491	32%
DAYTON CITY	1	814	6%	11%	81%	55%	\$8,557	20%
DECATUR COUNTY	4	1,685	4%	5%	90%	58%	\$8,907	29%
DEKALB COUNTY	6	2,987	2%	11%	86%	64%	\$7,983	19%
DICKSON COUNTY	15	8,494	8%	5%	86%	53%	\$8,473	33%
DYER COUNTY	8	3,994	7%	3%	89%	60%	\$8,483	33%
DYERSBURG CITY	4	2,749	44%	5%	49%	73%	\$9,968	35%
ELIZABETHTON SSD	5	2,594	4%	2%	92%	54%	\$9,537	35%

TENNESSEE ASSESSMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 MATH	PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 READING	TVAAS COMPOSITE	TVAAS NUMERACY	TVAAS LITERACY	EOC ENGLISH II	EOC ALGEBRA I	EOC BIOLOGY I	ACT COMPOSITE	GRADUATION RATE	ACT COLLEGE READINESS
30%	13%	1	2	2	*	26%	25%	14.2	48%	*
63%	54%	5	3	4	*	*	*	*	*	*
58%	50%	2	3	4	80%	79%	88%	22.0	99%	31%
*	*	5	5	5	66%	80%	70%	*	75%	*
56%	46%	1	3	1	59%	70%	74%	19.9	97%	16%
77%	76%	5	5	5	78%	84%	83%	21.1	95%	*
62%	53%	5	5	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
67%	61%	5	4	5	75%	72%	72%	20.5	86%	*
54%	44%	3	2	5	63%	60%	62%	18.4	93%	10%
61%	61%	5	2	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
55%	46%	3	5	3	61%	70%	77%	18.4	94%	11%
41%	35%	1	1	1	53%	65%	73%	19.2	84%	11%
52%	46%	1	1	1	66%	70%	65%	19.7	91%	19%
73%	56%	5	5	5	68%	95%	88%	18.7	89%	6%
57%	52%	5	5	5	66%	0%	64%	18.8	92%	13%
63%	55%	3	3	5	73%	67%	65%	21.3	90%	21%
45%	37%	1	1	1	51%	72%	49%	17.2	88%	6%
50%	45%	1	1	1	61%	*	67%	18.6	88%	15%
47%	40%	5	5	5	69%	*	70%	18.3	84%	7%
56%	46%	2	5	2	58%	0%	73%	20.8	90%	23%
67%	54%	5	5	4	73%	70%	77%	19.7	93%	15%
52%	43%	1	1	1	60%	52%	53%	17.7	90%	8%
40%	34%	3	3	2	58%	68%	66%	18.4	96%	13%
53%	46%	5	5	5	61%	54%	51%	18.9	86%	13%
69%	58%	5	5	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
59%	43%	1	1	1	57%	60%	60%	18.3	90%	13%
58%	48%	5	5	4	65%	68%	67%	20.0	90%	19%
77%	75%	5	5	5	86%	87%	87%	24.0	91%	*
57%	49%	3	3	2	66%	78%	78%	19.1	97%	12%
59%	52%	3	3	3	65%	84%	73%	19.6	92%	19%
50%	48%	1	1	2	*	*	*	*	*	*
60%	47%	1	2	1	70%	70%	73%	18.6	90%	7%
54%	46%	4	3	4	72%	53%	72%	17.7	96%	11%
61%	52%	1	1	1	72%	60%	70%	21.0	90%	21%
65%	55%	5	5	5	69%	86%	81%	21.3	94%	24%
58%	46%	5	5	5	67%	63%	69%	21.7	87%	29%
63%	57%	5	4	3	68%	78%	84%	21.4	91%	27%

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT HISPANIC	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
ETOWAH CITY	1	338	7%	4%	88%	74%	\$10,808	22%
FAYETTE COUNTY	8	3,550	59%	5%	36%	81%	\$9,126	31%
FAYETTEVILLE CITY	3	1,549	32%	5%	61%	53%	\$8,473	29%
FENTRESS COUNTY	6	2,293	1%	1%	98%	75%	\$9,044	19%
FRANKLIN COUNTY	11	5,686	7%	5%	87%	58%	\$8,610	32%
FRANKLIN SSD	8	3,739	16%	24%	54%	39%	\$13,386	68%
GERMANTOWN	5	5,744	12%	3%	73%	10%	\$7,931	48%
GIBSON COUNTY	9	4,037	8%	2%	90%	42%	\$7,270	27%
GILES COUNTY	8	4,030	17%	2%	79%	62%	\$8,952	32%
GRAINGER COUNTY	9	3,609	1%	6%	94%	66%	\$8,436	16%
GREENE COUNTY	16	7,065	2%	3%	95%	66%	\$8,283	25%
GREENEVILLE CITY	7	2,826	10%	8%	80%	47%	\$10,863	45%
GRUNDY COUNTY	8	2,287	<0.5%	1%	99%	81%	\$9,088	14%
HAMBLÉN COUNTY	18	10,345	7%	22%	70%	64%	\$8,109	34%
HAMILTON COUNTY	79	43,797	31%	10%	57%	61%	\$9,729	53%
HANCOCK COUNTY	2	958	<0.5%	<0.5%	98%	82%	\$9,762	12%
HARDEMAN COUNTY	9	3,945	54%	2%	44%	82%	\$9,821	23%
HARDIN COUNTY	7	3,676	6%	2%	91%	75%	\$8,709	35%
HAWKINS COUNTY	18	7,169	2%	3%	95%	62%	\$9,132	29%
HAYWOOD COUNTY	5	3,164	63%	7%	29%	76%	\$9,888	22%
HENDERSON COUNTY	9	3,993	8%	2%	90%	61%	\$8,413	25%
HENRY COUNTY	6	3,138	7%	2%	90%	60%	\$9,285	35%
HICKMAN COUNTY	8	3,611	3%	2%	94%	69%	\$8,966	17%
HOLLOW ROCK BRUCETON	2	651	9%	2%	88%	76%	\$8,332	21%
HOUSTON COUNTY	5	1,394	5%	2%	91%	57%	\$9,188	17%
HUMBOLDT CITY	4	1,151	75%	4%	20%	98%	\$11,122	23%
HUMPHREYS COUNTY	7	3,033	5%	2%	92%	58%	\$8,856	25%
HUNTINGDON SSD	3	1,246	18%	1%	80%	45%	\$8,158	25%
JACKSON COUNTY	4	1,569	1%	2%	97%	83%	\$9,166	18%
JACKSON-MADISON COUNTY	27	13,063	61%	7%	32%	78%	\$9,489	44%
JEFFERSON COUNTY	12	7,510	3%	7%	89%	62%	\$8,628	31%
JOHNSON CITY	11	7,902	14%	9%	73%	50%	\$9,434	54%
JOHNSON COUNTY	7	2,238	1%	4%	95%	81%	\$10,449	22%
KINGSPORT CITY	12	7,298	10%	4%	83%	57%	\$10,439	55%
KNOX COUNTY	90	59,750	17%	7%	73%	40%	\$9,043	53%
LAKE COUNTY	3	901	30%	3%	66%	77%	\$10,813	18%
LAKELAND	1	851	8%	3%	79%	15%	\$8,685	45%

TENNESSEE ASSESSMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 MATH	PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 READING	TVAAS COMPOSITE	TVAAS NUMERACY	TVAAS LITERACY	EOC ENGLISH II	EOC ALGEBRA I	EOC BIOLOGY I	ACT COMPOSITE	GRADUATION RATE	ACT COLLEGE READINESS
40%	39%	1	1	2	*	*	*	*	*	*
36%	33%	5	2	5	53%	40%	56%	16.6	80	3%
48%	48%	3	3	4	68%	63%	64%	19.3	96	*
51%	44%	5	5	3	72%	81%	100%	17.4	99	2%
46%	42%	2	1	2	63%	64%	61%	18.7	91	11%
75%	69%	3	3	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
76%	79%	3	3	5	88%	85%	89%	24.1	90	*
68%	58%	2	5	3	73%	84%	75%	19.7	95	17%
49%	45%	3	3	2	56%	64%	51%	18.2	84	10%
45%	38%	3	1	3	52%	56%	56%	18.0	89	10%
46%	43%	1	1	4	62%	64%	63%	18.9	92	13%
66%	59%	5	5	5	75%	83%	78%	21.3	96	24%
38%	32%	1	1	1	62%	48%	52%	17.6	86	7%
60%	48%	5	5	4	68%	71%	71%	19.7	93	21%
57%	45%	1	1	1	60%	49%	58%	18.9	85	15%
28%	26%	1	1	1	53%	51%	32%	17.4	84	8%
48%	36%	1	1	1	51%	52%	47%	17.7	90	6%
44%	44%	1	1	2	58%	58%	57%	18.9	88	12%
55%	46%	1	1	1	56%	66%	58%	19.3	90	14%
45%	34%	1	1	1	44%	58%	46%	17.4	85	8%
72%	53%	5	5	5	78%	86%	76%	19.5	96	17%
70%	53%	3	3	1	70%	76%	84%	19.6	94	18%
58%	49%	2	1	3	58%	40%	54%	18.4	93	13%
48%	37%	3	2	3	47%	78%	50%	18.0	89	6%
56%	45%	3	4	1	66%	59%	70%	19.2	92	14%
38%	27%	1	1	2	41%	86%	36%	15.9	86	0%
51%	47%	1	1	1	74%	52%	74%	18.9	91	15%
76%	58%	5	5	5	73%	73%	60%	18.7	100	13%
45%	43%	1	1	2	47%	46%	69%	18.4	85	12%
39%	38%	1	1	2	52%	53%	51%	17.3	91	9%
50%	41%	5	5	5	70%	80%	77%	19.5	95	16%
74%	67%	5	5	5	78%	86%	82%	21.8	92	34%
52%	50%	1	1	1	50%	75%	65%	19.2	94	15%
69%	59%	3	1	3	78%	81%	84%	22.2	94	36%
57%	53%	5	5	5	71%	65%	70%	20.7	90	24%
35%	33%	1	1	1	35%	23%	25%	16.4	85	5%
88%	83%	5	5	5	*	*	*	*	*	*

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT HISPANIC	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
LAUDERDALE COUNTY	7	4,541	44%	3%	52%	81%	\$8,877	17%
LAWRENCE COUNTY	13	6,842	3%	3%	94%	51%	\$8,387	22%
LEBANON SSD	6	3,799	18%	13%	66%	62%	\$8,444	45%
LENOIR CITY	3	2,397	3%	25%	71%	63%	\$9,136	47%
LEWIS COUNTY	4	1,866	3%	2%	93%	72%	\$7,985	17%
LEXINGTON CITY	2	1,011	25%	7%	67%	62%	\$9,926	28%
LINCOLN COUNTY	8	4,036	3%	4%	91%	57%	\$8,153	24%
LOUDON COUNTY	9	4,947	3%	11%	85%	55%	\$8,777	45%
MACON COUNTY	8	3,858	1%	8%	90%	63%	\$8,167	20%
MANCHESTER CITY	3	1,328	6%	15%	77%	24%	\$12,309	39%
MARION COUNTY	10	4,262	5%	2%	92%	65%	\$8,697	28%
MARSHALL COUNTY	9	5,387	9%	8%	82%	54%	\$8,584	29%
MARYVILLE CITY	7	5,131	4%	4%	88%	32%	\$10,161	56%
MAURY COUNTY	21	12,263	19%	9%	71%	56%	\$9,106	36%
MCKENZIE SSD	3	1,369	16%	5%	79%	59%	\$7,756	22%
MCMINN COUNTY	9	5,863	6%	5%	89%	66%	\$7,870	29%
MCNAIRY COUNTY	8	4,347	8%	2%	90%	58%	\$7,790	21%
MEIGS COUNTY	4	1,839	1%	1%	97%	69%	\$8,703	18%
MILAN SSD	3	2,041	27%	3%	69%	63%	\$8,750	27%
MILLINGTON MUNICIPAL	4	2,771	39%	11%	47%	75%	\$8,913	47%
MONROE COUNTY	13	5,531	3%	5%	92%	66%	\$8,557	27%
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	38	32,056	28%	12%	56%	49%	\$8,676	34%
MOORE COUNTY	2	927	4%	0%	95%	49%	\$9,947	37%
MORGAN COUNTY	8	3,192	1%	1%	97%	68%	\$8,598	14%
MURFREESBORO CITY	12	7,961	29%	12%	54%	53%	\$9,355	41%
NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY	154	84,070	44%	21%	31%	75%	\$11,496	59%
NEWPORT CITY	1	771	7%	3%	87%	58%	\$9,216	30%
OAK RIDGE CITY	7	4,438	17%	8%	70%	53%	\$12,356	54%
OBION COUNTY	7	3,622	6%	5%	89%	59%	\$8,732	30%
ONEIDA SSD	3	1,311	0%	0%	98%	64%	\$8,406	21%
OVERTON COUNTY	9	3,254	1%	1%	97%	72%	\$8,426	17%
PARIS SSD	3	1,767	26%	2%	71%	64%	\$8,841	36%
PERRY COUNTY	4	1,137	3%	2%	93%	72%	\$9,212	21%
PICKETT COUNTY	2	771	*	2%	97%	65%	\$8,184	18%
POLK COUNTY	6	2,561	1%	2%	96%	71%	\$8,629	27%
PUTNAM COUNTY	20	11,219	4%	11%	82%	55%	\$8,816	34%
RHEA COUNTY	7	4,443	2%	8%	89%	70%	\$9,006	26%

TENNESSEE ASSESSMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 MATH	PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 READING	TVAAS COMPOSITE	TVAAS NUMERACY	TVAAS LITERACY	EOC ENGLISH II	EOC ALGEBRA I	EOC BIOLOGY I	ACT COMPOSITE	GRADUATION RATE	ACT COLLEGE READINESS
54%	41%	5	5	4	58%	80%	52%	17.6	99%	9%
69%	57%	4	5	2	70%	87%	76%	19.2	93%	15%
54%	50%	5	1	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
47%	34%	3	5	2	69%	63%	65%	18.9	88%	13%
50%	48%	1	1	1	62%	54%	53%	18.5	86%	9%
67%	47%	1	2	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
67%	58%	5	5	5	74%	77%	77%	19.6	96%	14%
62%	55%	3	3	4	69%	69%	69%	18.8	87%	15%
49%	43%	5	4	5	64%	77%	64%	18.5	80%	9%
59%	54%	1	1	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
53%	46%	1	3	1	59%	*	78%	18.7	83%	13%
60%	48%	5	5	5	73%	86%	74%	18.9	92%	13%
73%	70%	5	5	5	83%	73%	92%	23.0	94%	39%
47%	43%	1	3	3	62%	61%	65%	18.6	91%	13%
64%	56%	3	3	3	76%	78%	71%	20.1	98%	18%
53%	48%	4	1	5	69%	76%	72%	18.9	93%	13%
60%	47%	5	5	3	65%	59%	60%	18.6	87%	12%
59%	49%	3	3	4	76%	71%	72%	19.2	97%	14%
72%	49%	5	5	5	65%	63%	84%	20.6	95%	25%
50%	42%	3	3	3	54%	52%	51%	17.7	84%	*
49%	41%	1	3	2	59%	63%	66%	17.9	95%	9%
64%	56%	5	5	5	71%	71%	77%	19.4	97%	17%
63%	54%	5	3	5	73%	74%	85%	18.5	90%	6%
36%	34%	1	1	1	55%	49%	52%	17.9	96%	8%
62%	49%	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
47%	39%	5	1	5	56%	56%	52%	18.7	82%	14%
55%	57%	1	1	3	*	*	*	*	*	*
58%	56%	1	1	3	75%	69%	84%	23.1	90%	42%
54%	47%	1	2	2	66%	78%	75%	19.1	88%	12%
49%	48%	4	5	3	69%	74%	87%	19.4	94%	9%
58%	48%	1	1	1	56%	78%	71%	18.9	91%	12%
62%	52%	4	3	2	*	*	*	*	*	*
62%	43%	3	3	3	61%	49%	58%	18.0	95%	7%
29%	34%	1	1	1	65%	86%	70%	19.7	95%	18%
54%	42%	3	3	2	55%	61%	70%	17.9	91%	8%
53%	49%	1	1	1	69%	*	74%	19.6	93%	19%
60%	48%	3	3	3	69%	76%	62%	18.6	81%	13%

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT HISPANIC	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
RICHARD CITY	1	285	6%	*	92%	59%	\$9,224	26%
ROANE COUNTY	17	7,008	5%	2%	92%	60%	\$8,960	37%
ROBERTSON COUNTY	20	11,636	11%	12%	76%	52%	\$8,077	30%
ROGERSVILLE CITY	1	647	4%	2%	92%	52%	\$9,442	34%
RUTHERFORD COUNTY	47	41,901	19%	12%	65%	40%	\$8,237	40%
SCOTT COUNTY	7	3,066	*	1%	98%	87%	\$8,242	14%
SEQUATCHIE COUNTY	3	2,339	1%	5%	93%	68%	\$7,905	23%
SEVIER COUNTY	28	14,609	2%	9%	87%	63%	\$9,614	62%
SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS	221	116,059	78%	11%	8%	80%	\$11,222	40%
SMITH COUNTY	9	3,173	4%	4%	92%	58%	\$8,324	23%
SOUTH CARROLL SSD	1	373	8%	*	89%	64%	\$9,253	23%
STEWART COUNTY	5	2,111	3%	2%	94%	49%	\$9,003	22%
SULLIVAN COUNTY	23	10,402	2%	2%	96%	58%	\$9,190	45%
SUMNER COUNTY	47	28,906	11%	7%	81%	37%	\$8,402	46%
SWEETWATER CITY	4	1,603	8%	9%	83%	79%	\$8,332	26%
TENN SCHOOL FOR DEAF	3	160	26%	6%	65%	0%	*	*
TENN SCHOOL FOR BLIND	1	143	16%	10%	70%	33%	*	*
TIPTON COUNTY	14	11,547	25%	2%	72%	56%	\$8,279	21%
TRENTON SSD	3	1,411	28%	6%	65%	66%	\$8,917	28%
TROUSDALE COUNTY	3	1,225	15%	4%	81%	57%	\$8,817	19%
TULLAHOMA CITY	7	3,513	12%	6%	80%	46%	\$10,178	48%
UNICOI COUNTY	7	2,503	1%	11%	88%	67%	\$9,362	22%
UNION CITY	3	1,580	42%	11%	47%	68%	\$9,230	35%
UNION COUNTY	10	4,346	6%	3%	90%	72%	\$8,803	11%
VAN BUREN COUNTY	2	780	*	*	100%	64%	\$9,622	20%
WARREN COUNTY	11	6,721	6%	16%	77%	70%	\$8,601	22%
WASHINGTON COUNTY	17	8,790	3%	3%	93%	48%	\$8,501	44%
WAYNE COUNTY	8	2,414	1%	2%	97%	44%	\$9,506	16%
WEAKLEY COUNTY	11	4,425	10%	2%	87%	58%	\$8,439	24%
WEST CARROLL SSD	3	941	11%	2%	86%	69%	\$8,573	23%
WEST TN SCHOOL FOR DEAF	1	39	49%	*	44%	77%	*	*
WHITE COUNTY	9	4,153	4%	2%	93%	67%	\$7,721	21%
WILLIAMSON COUNTY	41	35,578	5%	5%	83%	10%	\$8,740	56%
WILSON COUNTY	21	17,079	8%	5%	85%	29%	\$7,691	41%
TENNESSEE	1,811	995,892	24%	9%	65%	58%	\$9,375	40%

TENNESSEE ASSESSMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 MATH	PERCENT PROF/ADV 3-8 READING	TVAAS COMPOSITE	TVAAS NUMERACY	TVAAS LITERACY	EOC ENGLISH II	EOC ALGEBRA I	EOC BIOLOGY I	ACT COMPOSITE	GRADUATION RATE	ACT COLLEGE READINESS
59%	51%	3	3	3	88%	78%	62%	20.1	93%	0%
54%	48%	1	1	1	65%	66%	66%	19.0	92%	13%
56%	48%	3	3	5	68%	72%	65%	19.4	95%	15%
65%	62%	3	4	4	*	*	*	*	*	*
66%	59%	5	1	1	72%	72%	73%	19.9	94%	19%
42%	42%	1	1	1	53%	55%	52%	16.8	90%	6%
48%	38%	1	1	1	69%	68%	78%	19.4	77%	12%
47%	43%	1	1	1	66%	66%	64%	20.3	85%	22%
40%	33%	5	5	5	49%	54%	43%	16.9	75%	7%
57%	48%	1	1	1	69%	*	71%	18.5	91%	14%
58%	53%	5	5	3	69%	83%	65%	17.8	92%	9%
69%	55%	3	3	5	71%	78%	67%	19.4	97%	11%
52%	49%	1	1	1	62%	63%	62%	19.9	93%	18%
69%	60%	5	5	5	70%	71%	69%	20.4	92%	21%
60%	50%	3	5	3	*	*	*	*	*	*
3%	4%	*	*	*	7%	*	12%	*	83%	*
2%	7%	*	*	*	*	17%	25%	*	*	*
65%	49%	5	5	5	72%	81%	68%	19.7	98%	15%
63%	45%	5	5	5	76%	92%	76%	18.6	86%	15%
76%	60%	3	2	1	71%	76%	59%	20.8	99%	29%
53%	46%	2	3	3	65%	69%	72%	22.4	82%	36%
48%	43%	1	1	1	63%	51%	73%	18.1	90%	9%
55%	46%	5	5	5	67%	74%	74%	21.1	89%	27%
38%	38%	5	5	3	55%	63%	53%	17.4	92%	10%
42%	36%	4	5	3	58%	68%	49%	18.4	99%	3%
49%	44%	3	5	2	61%	*	57%	18.4	91%	12%
62%	55%	1	1	1	68%	66%	68%	19.7	89%	14%
43%	37%	1	1	1	69%	72%	70%	18.2	95%	7%
60%	55%	1	1	2	72%	76%	81%	19.7	94%	17%
48%	41%	3	5	1	67%	62%	74%	18.9	96%	13%
0%	0%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
59%	47%	2	4	1	72%	80%	83%	18.7	94%	13%
82%	81%	2	1	3	89%	86%	89%	23.8	96%	45%
67%	61%	5	5	5	76%	63%	74%	20.0	96%	19%
56%	48%				65	66	65	19.4%	88%	17%

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 11th-graders in Tennessee are required to take the exam.¹⁷⁹

ACT College Readiness Benchmarks – The ACT benchmarks on subject-area tests represent the minimum score required for students to have approximately a 50 percent chance of earning a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in the corresponding college-level course. The ACT tests in English, math, reading, and science correspond to college credit courses in English composition, algebra, social sciences, and biology.¹⁸⁰

Advanced Placement (AP) – The College Board offers Advanced Placement courses that provide students with an opportunity to take college-level courses and earn college credit while in high school. There are more than 30 different AP courses available across multiple subject areas.¹⁸¹

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 students for jobs in fields such as agriculture, engineering, and health care.¹⁸²

Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) – A group of eight regional offices around Tennessee formed to support collaborative relationships, differentiated professional learning opportunities, and evidence-based best practice sharing between districts. CORE staff work closely with district staff to support the implementation of key policies and programs that aim to drive improved student learning. CORE offices focus on key areas of district practice including data-driven decision making, curriculum



support, leader and teacher effectiveness, balanced assessment systems, and response to instruction and intervention.¹⁸³

Constructed Response Assessment (CRA) – CRAs are math assessments that were offered to students in grades 3-8, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. CRAs were optional in the 2013-14 school year. CRAs were intended to provide teachers and students with assessments that reflect the level of rigor that will be present on new, aligned math assessments. The results from these assessments did not factor into teacher evaluations or student grades.

Differentiated Pay Plans – Differentiated pay plans tie a teacher's compensation and incentives to professional learning, student achievement, leadership roles, a willingness to teach in high-need subjects or areas, and other measures. Differentiated pay plans differ from traditional salary schedules, which uniformly increase teachers' compensation

based on number of years teaching and level of degree completion.¹⁸⁴

Drive to 55 – Governor Bill Haslam's Drive to 55 initiative aims to increase the percentage of Tennesseans with a college degree or certificate to 55 percent by 2025. This initiative encompasses several different programs including Tennessee Promise, which offers two years of tuition-free community or technical college to Tennessee high school graduates.¹⁸⁵

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. ¹⁸⁶

Dual Enrollment – Dual enrollment is a postsecondary course taught at either a postsecondary institution or high school that allows students to simultaneously earn postsecondary and secondary course credit upon successful completion of the course.¹⁸⁷

End-of-Course (EOC) Exams – Tennessee high schools administer End-of-Course exams in English I, II, and III, algebra I and II, geometry, U.S. history, biology I, chemistry, and physics. The exams count for 25 percent of a student's final grade.¹⁸⁸

Formative Assessments – Formative assessments are optional assessments selected by school districts and used to monitor student learning throughout the school year. Formative assessments provide teachers and students with ongoing feedback on students' progress toward mastery on specific academic standards. More specifically, formative assessments help students identify strengths and opportunities for growth in different subject areas. Formative assessments help educators better understand student needs and adjust their instruction to improve their students' learning outcomes.

International Baccalaureate (IB) – The International Baccalaureate is a nonprofit organization that offers four educational programs on a continuum for students aged 3 to 19: the Primary Years Program, the Middle Years Program, the Diploma Program, and the Career-related Certificate. IB students are encouraged to develop an understanding of their own cultural and national identity.¹⁸⁹

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.¹⁹⁰

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

Request for Proposal (RFP) – A solicitation made through a bidding process by an agency or company looking to procure a product or service. In 2014, Tennessee's Central Procurement Office issued an RFP to potential vendors for a statewide summative assessment in English language arts and math.

Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI²) – RTI² focuses on high-quality instruction and interventions that are tailored to individual student needs and where instructional decisions are made based on student outcome



data on high-quality assessments. It is a three-tiered model with progressively more intense interventions provided to students who are not showing growth in general instruction or in response to initial interventions. Student progress is monitored regularly through research-based assessments, ensuring that instructional decisions and decisions to intervene are made based on student data.¹⁹¹

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) – STEM is a common acronym for the fields of study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Beyond the subject areas, STEM education reflects an innovative approach to teaching and learning that incorporates problem solving, critical thinking, and real-world application of skills.

Summative Assessments – Summative assessments are given at the end of instructional units or school years to evaluate students' progress toward mastery on a set of academic standards. State standardized assessments such as the TCAP Achievement and End of Course exams are examples of summative assessments given in Tennessee.¹⁹²

Teacher Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) – TEAM is Tennessee's teacher and principal evaluation

model. This model uses a combination of classroom observations, student growth data, student achievement data, and other factors to measure teaching effectiveness in Tennessee.

Tennessee Diploma Project – As a part of the American Diploma Project, this 2009 initiative increased the rigor of Tennessee's academic standards and graduation requirements with the aim of better aligning them with the demands of college and the workforce.

Tennessee's State Standards in English Language Arts and Math – Tennessee adopted new standards in English language arts and math in 2010. These standards set higher expectations for students with the aim of ensuring that all Tennessee students are prepared for success in college and the workforce.

Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) – TVAAS aims to measure the impact a district, school, or teacher has on the academic growth of individual students and groups of students from one school year to the next. TVAAS scores are based on student performance on Tennessee's achievement tests.¹⁹³





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Thank you to our graduate fellows and interns.





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TNSCORE.ORG



1207 18th Avenue South
Suite 326
Nashville, TN 37212
615.727.1545

