

# 2014-15

## STATE OF EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE



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## LETTER FROM SENATOR BILL FRIST AND JAMIE WOODSON

January 16, 2015

In 2014, Tennessee faced challenges in its work to maintain a commitment to preparing all students for success after high school. These challenges drove parents, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to reflect on where we started and to recognize why we have come so far. Diverse stakeholders asked important questions: Why is it so important to set such high expectations for student learning? How do we best support the teachers and school leaders who are working to improve student learning in our classrooms every day? How can we continue to break down the barriers preventing our students from achieving success in college and career?

When SCORE was launched in 2009, we saw an opportunity to pull diverse stakeholders together around the unifying goal of dramatically improving student achievement in Tennessee. Over the last several years, the collaborative efforts of educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders have helped Tennessee become the fastest-improving state in the nation in terms of student achievement. The gains Tennessee students made are significant and unprecedented in our state's history. From raising academic standards to developing meaningful educator evaluations, Tennessee has become a national leader in the work to improve student achievement. Our state passed and implemented courageous policies to help ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce.

As we begin 2015, it will be important to reflect on the significant progress we have made and to jointly recommit to the important work ahead. Student achievement is improving, but this improvement must be sustained and accelerated. To ensure our students continue to grow in their achievement in 2015, we will need to implement high-quality assessments that are aligned to Tennessee's State Standards, to ensure the continued and improved implementation of Tennessee's State Standards in math and English language arts, to elevate the teaching profession in Tennessee, and to transform instruction through effective school leadership. As we push forward in each of these key areas, we must continue to measure our progress, identify challenges, and construct innovative solutions to persistent problems.

The *2014-15 State of Education in Tennessee* report provides an overview of the academic gains the state has made, examines the work that has contributed to the improvements students have experienced, highlights education priorities for Tennessee in 2015, and provides extensive state and district data. We share this information with the continued understanding that our ultimate goal is for every student in Tennessee to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. It will take the dedication of all partners in the work – from educators and policymakers to parents and students – for Tennessee to reach this goal. We look forward to our work in the year ahead and hope you will join us as we continue to push toward a goal of college and career readiness for all Tennessee students.



*Bill Frist*      *Jamie Woodson*

A photograph of two young boys working on a project in a classroom. The boy on the left, wearing a blue t-shirt, is leaning over a table and looking down at his work. The boy on the right, wearing a green t-shirt, is standing and looking down at the same work. They are both focused on their task. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students and classroom shelves. A large green diagonal graphic element is on the right side of the image.

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**In 2013, Tennessee reached an important milestone, becoming the fastest-improving state in the nation** in fourth- and eighth-grade math and reading on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), following only the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> In 2014, Tennessee also saw significant improvements in student ACT scores, with composite scores increasing from a 19.5 to a 19.8. Tennessee students, alongside students in Kentucky and Wyoming, showed the largest growth among the 12 states that require all students to take the ACT.<sup>2</sup> These data serve as early indicators of the impact the collaborative efforts of students, parents, teachers, school and district leaders, and state policymakers are having on student learning in Tennessee.

Beginning with the State Board of Education's approval of the Tennessee Diploma Project Standards in 2008 and the passage of the First to the Top Act in 2010, Tennessee implemented a series of programs and policies collectively aimed to prepare Tennessee students for success in college and career. As Tennessee works to maintain an impressive rate of student growth, it is important to recognize and scale up best practices, acknowledge the challenges still existing in classrooms across the state, and identify innovative solutions to persistent problems.

While recent NAEP data indicate that Tennessee students are showing growth in both math and reading, these and other data also indicate that students are still behind their peers in other states and countries. Only 19 percent of students met all four college readiness benchmarks on the ACT, leading Tennessee to rank 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 states where 75 percent or more students take the ACT.<sup>3</sup> While students have shown impressive growth on NAEP, Tennessee's performance continues to fall below the national average on national assessments.

Since 2009, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) has published an annual report on the state of education in Tennessee. These reports provide an update on the work taking place to improve student achievement in Tennessee, highlighting successes and challenges faced over the past year and setting education priorities for the coming year. These priorities are developed collaboratively through conversations with teachers, principals, school district leaders, business leaders, policymakers, and state-level education leaders. The recommendations set forth in each of these priorities intend to guide the work of education partners in Tennessee in the coming year, with the ultimate goal of improved learning for all students.

The *2014–15 State of Education in Tennessee* report provides an update on the state's work in education over the past year, highlighting both successes and challenges faced in districts and schools across Tennessee. This report also sets forth four central priorities for Tennessee's education efforts in 2015. These priorities represent a framework that can guide work in the year ahead for all education partners in Tennessee, from teachers to policymakers.

These priorities are highlighted briefly below and explained in detail throughout the report:

- › *Select and implement high-quality assessments that are nationally benchmarked and aligned to Tennessee's State Standards.*
- › *Ensure the continued and improved implementation of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.*
- › *Elevate the teaching profession in Tennessee to ensure high-quality candidates pursue a career in education and Tennessee's current teachers receive the support they need to improve student learning.*
- › *Transform instruction through high-quality school leadership that meets local needs.*

**Select and implement high-quality assessments that are nationally benchmarked and aligned to Tennessee's State Standards.**

While the implementation of rigorous standards is an important step toward ensuring Tennessee students are prepared for college and career, it is difficult for students and educators to measure progress on those standards without a high-quality, fully aligned assessment. One of the biggest challenges educators faced in 2014 was the misalignment between Tennessee's State Standards and current end-of-year assessments in math and English language arts. In 2015, it is critically important to implement assessments that will provide educators, parents, and students with accurate information about students' progress toward college and career readiness.

As the new statewide assessment, TNReady, is implemented, it is important to engage and inform the public on that assessment, highlighting the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments as well as providing transparent information about the selected assessment to diverse stakeholders. Tennessee education partners should launch a statewide communications campaign in the summer of 2015 that engages and informs parents and the public on the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments. These efforts should empower educators to engage with parents, community members, and policymakers on the assessment.

In order for the state to successfully transition to technology-based assessments, Tennessee foundations, business partners, and Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) should support district leaders in their efforts to upgrade technological infrastructure and access in their schools. Additionally, districts must prioritize schools' efforts to provide students with early instruction on technology and keyboarding skills to prepare them for technology-based assessments, and success in college and career.

While summative assessments provide important feedback to teachers and students about growth and progress achieved at the end of the school year, formative assessments provide this information to teachers throughout the year. For this reason, it is important for CORE offices to provide district and school leaders with support in their selection of formative assessments to ensure they are aligned to Tennessee's State Standards and provide educators with the information they need to improve student learning.

### **Ensure the continued and improved implementation of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.**

Tennessee's State Standards are now implemented across all grades statewide. It is important to ensure that the current public review process of the standards is focused on continuous improvement and results in higher standards for Tennessee students, not lower standards. Additionally, policymakers should refrain from passing legislation changing the state's standards while this process is ongoing.

To ensure the standards reach all students, continued support for teachers and school leaders is critical as they work to integrate the new standards into their daily practice. Professional learning opportunities should be offered to additional teachers and school leaders around the state, providing more educators with the resources they need to successfully transition to new standards. It is also important to continue to engage parents and community members on the standards, informing the larger public on what the standards are and why they are important to Tennessee students' academic growth.

As educators continue to implement Tennessee's State Standards, school districts have an important role to play in providing educators with support and guidance in the selection of high-quality, aligned learning materials. CORE offices, school districts, and the Tennessee Department of Education should create a tool or network that allows Core Coaches, instructional coaches, and teachers to share aligned resources with one another.

### **Elevate the teaching profession in Tennessee to ensure that high-quality candidates pursue a career in education and that Tennessee's current teachers receive the support they need to improve student learning.**

The first step in improving the quality of teaching in Tennessee is to recruit high-quality candidates to the profession and ensure Tennessee's teacher preparation programs provide teaching candidates with the skills needed for success in the classroom. In order to improve the quality of preparation programs, it is important for the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education to develop a more rigorous teacher preparation program approval process that focuses on outcomes such as

teacher retention and teaching effectiveness, in addition to inputs such as selectivity of candidates and rigorous curricula. While the State Board of Education passed the Educator Preparation Policy in October 2014, laying the foundation for improvements in preparation programs in Tennessee, it is essential to ensure this policy is implemented effectively and that it yields significant improvements in teacher preparation throughout the state.

In order for current teachers to improve their instruction and experience ongoing professional growth, it is essential to provide teachers with high-quality coaching and support throughout their careers. School districts and CORE offices should offer professional learning opportunities for school leaders on the teacher evaluation, providing them with the skills they need to support and coach teachers toward instructional improvement.

It is also important to recognize and reward highly effective teachers for the work they do to improve student learning in classrooms every day. In the 2013-14 school year, several districts had the opportunity to develop teacher leader models for their schools. It is important for school districts to work with the Tennessee Department of Education to expand these teacher leader models throughout the state and to explore other innovative ways to provide teachers with leadership opportunities throughout their careers. In order for Tennessee to attract and retain high-quality teachers in its schools and districts, it is important to provide teachers with competitive levels of compensation. Tennessee currently lags behind other states in teacher compensation, ranking 40<sup>th</sup> in average teacher pay.<sup>4</sup> In 2014, Tennessee made a commitment to being the fastest-improving state in the country in teacher pay and it is important for Tennessee's leaders to maintain that commitment in 2015.

While Tennessee students have shown impressive growth in math over the past several years, Tennessee achievement data indicate that students in grades 3-8 continue to struggle in reading.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, it is important for key leaders including the Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (TACTE), the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), educators, and other experts in literacy instruction to convene a taskforce to develop a strategic plan around literacy performance for Tennessee. This strategic plan should focus on developing instructional skills in literacy for both current teachers and incoming teachers.

### **Transform instruction through high-quality school leadership that meets local needs.**

While effective teaching yields improved learning for Tennessee students, school leaders provide teachers with the support they need to improve instruction and student learning in their classrooms. For this reason, it is important to improve all aspects of the principal pipeline to increase district access to high-quality school leaders. The first step in creating effective school leaders is recruiting high-quality candidates to principal preparation programs and improving the quality of those preparation programs to ensure they are providing principals with the skills they need to be instructional leaders. To do so, the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education should work to develop and implement a more rigorous principal

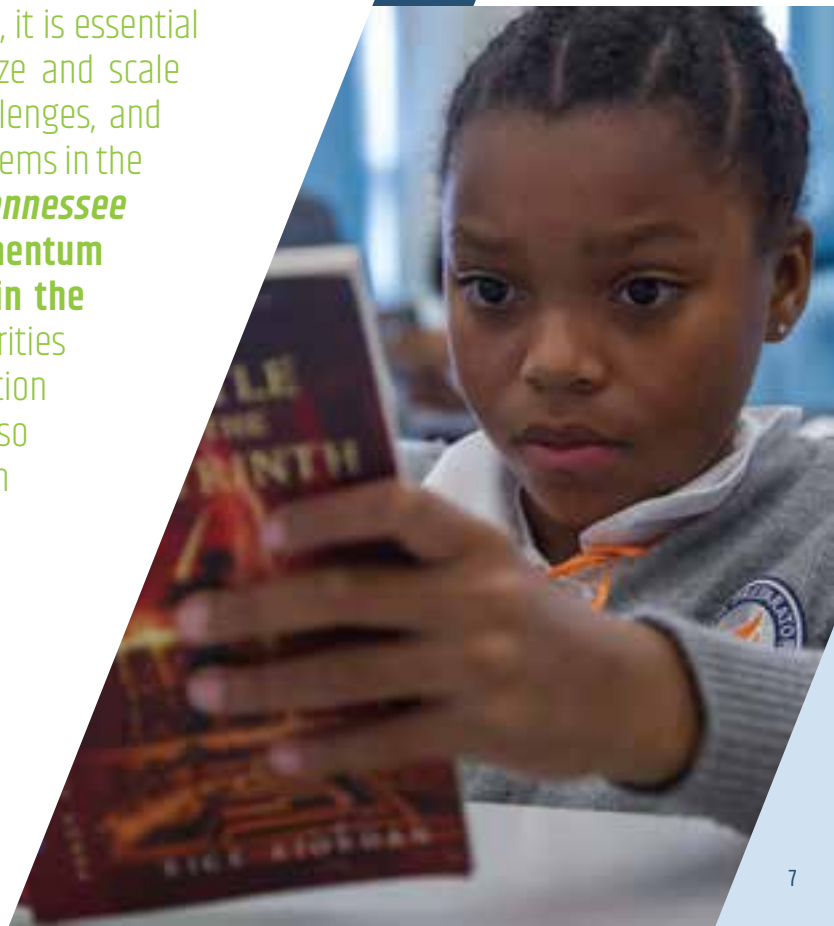
preparation program approval process that focuses on rigorous selection processes, a research-based curriculum, a high-quality clinical experience, and partnerships between preparation programs and local school districts.

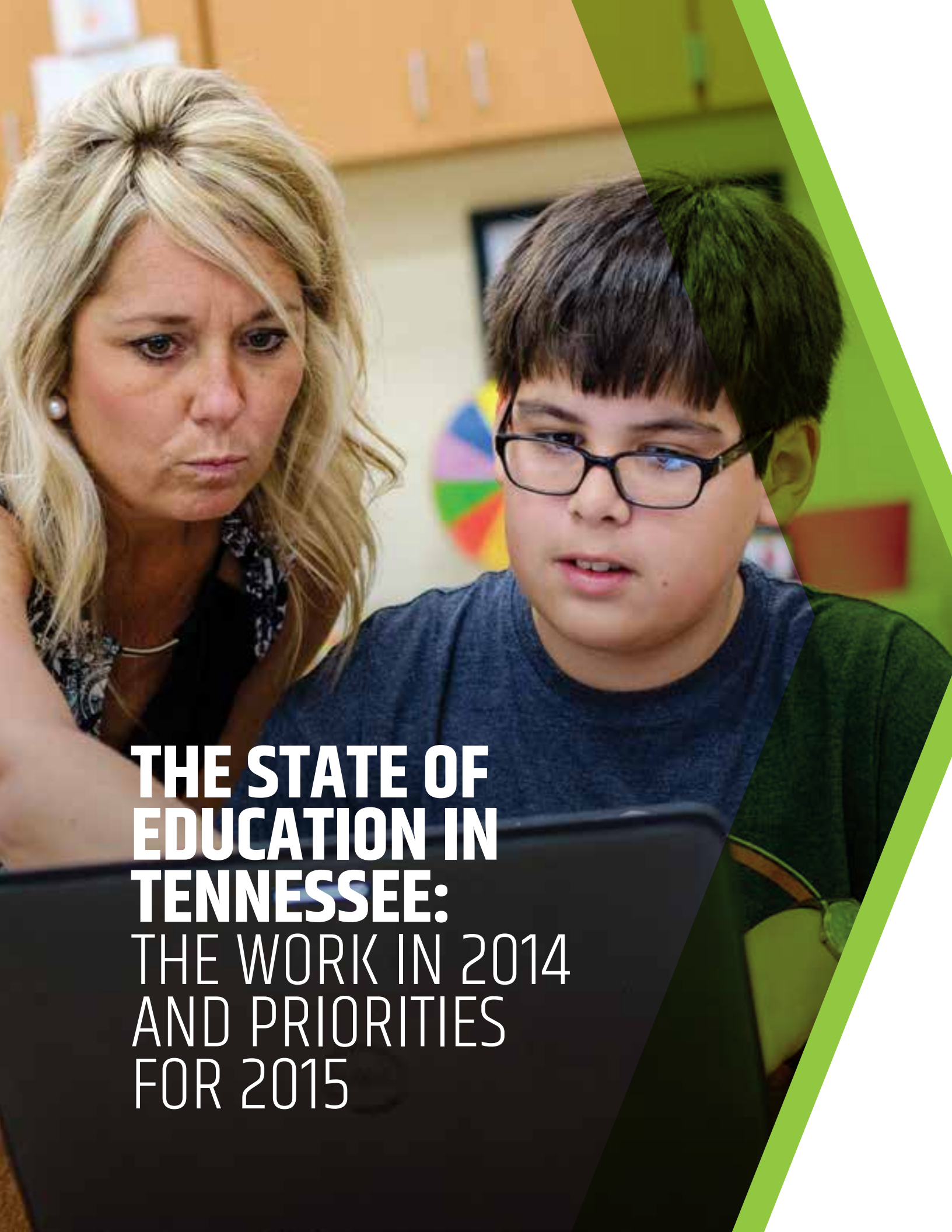
It is also critical to provide current principals with the support they need to be instructional leaders. The state should learn from existing district models of principal support and scale up best practices in other districts. CORE offices should convene regional professional learning communities, facilitating partnerships between districts with innovative support programs for principals with other districts looking to develop such programs.

In order to inform improvement practices both in principal preparation programs and to better understand the nature of the principal labor market, it is essential for a comprehensive principal pipeline data system to be created. To ensure these data are collected and compiled, the State Board of Education should pass a policy that requires principal preparation programs to report key metrics and indicators to the state on an annual basis. These reports should include metrics such as selection criteria, job placement rates, and completers' scores on the principal evaluation. THEC should work with its partners to compile these indicators and metrics to create a comprehensive data system on the principal pipeline.

Just as teachers need high-quality feedback and support as a result of teacher evaluation, principals also need high-quality feedback and support as a result of principal evaluation. As the new principal evaluation is implemented, CORE offices and district offices should ensure that district leaders have the capacity to implement the evaluation effectively and have the resources they need to support principals in their improvement efforts.

While Tennessee students made historic gains in achievement over the past several years, the state's work is not yet finished. To continue on its path toward student growth, it is essential for Tennessee education partners to recognize and scale up successes, acknowledge and address challenges, and identify innovative solutions to persistent problems in the field. **The 2014-15 State of Education in Tennessee report lays the foundation for forward momentum on four essential priorities for education in the coming year.** While the framework these priorities present will require the hard work and collaboration of Tennessee's education partners, they will also propel Tennessee forward on a continued path toward improved learning for all students.



A photograph of a woman with blonde hair and a young boy with dark hair and glasses looking at a laptop screen. The woman is on the left, leaning in, and the boy is on the right, looking at the screen. They are in a classroom setting with wooden cabinets and a colorful circular object in the background. A green diagonal graphic element is on the right side of the image.

# **THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE:** THE WORK IN 2014 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2015

## INTRODUCTION:

In 2013, Tennessee reached an important milestone, becoming the fastest-improving state in the nation in fourth and eighth-grade math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), following only the District of Columbia.<sup>6</sup> In 2014, Tennessee also saw improvements in student ACT scores, with composite scores increasing from a 19.5 to a 19.8. Tennessee students, alongside students in Kentucky and Wyoming, showed the largest growth among the 12 states that require all students to take the ACT.<sup>7</sup> These data serve as early indicators of the impact the collaborative efforts of students, parents, teachers, school and district leaders, and state policymakers are having on student learning in Tennessee.

Beginning with the State Board of Education's approval of the Tennessee Diploma Project Standards in 2008 and the passage of the First to the Top Act in 2010, Tennessee implemented a series of programs and policies collectively aimed at preparing Tennessee students for success in college and career. As Tennessee works to maintain this impressive rate of student growth, it is important to recognize and scale up best practices, acknowledge the challenges still faced in classrooms across the state, and identify innovative solutions to persistent problems.

Since 2009, SCORE has published an annual report on the state of education in Tennessee. These reports provide an update on the work taking place to improve student achievement in Tennessee, highlighting successes and challenges faced over the past year and setting education priorities for the coming year. These priorities are developed collaboratively through conversations with teachers, principals, district leaders, business leaders, policymakers, and state-level education leaders. The recommendations set forth in each of these priorities intend to guide the work of education partners in Tennessee in the coming year, all with the ultimate goal of improved learning for all students.

This report is informed first and foremost through conversations with teachers and principals across the state, highlighting both successes and challenges faced on the ground in Tennessee classrooms. SCORE also gathers information through one-on-one interviews with district leaders and state-level education leaders, and looks to other states, national education partners, and research for evidence-based best practices that can inform solutions in Tennessee. In addition to policy research, legislative research, and research on best practices in education, this report reflects information gathered through:

- › 21 focus groups with over 130 teachers and principals in 8 different cities across the state.
- › 7 in-depth interviews with over 20 district leaders.
- › 9 in-depth interviews with state-level leaders in education.
- › 5 in-depth interviews with national education partners.
- › Results from a survey of 45 Tennessee superintendents.

SCORE's 2013-14 *State of Education in Tennessee* report set forth the following education priorities for the state:

- › *Maintaining a commitment to rigorous standards and assessments*
- › *Strengthening schools through effective leadership*
- › *Expanding student access to great teaching*
- › *Investing in technology to enhance instruction*
- › *Supporting students from kindergarten to career*

Over the past year, Tennessee made notable progress in many of these priority areas. An overview of this progress is provided below and is highlighted in detail throughout this report.

**Maintaining a Commitment to Rigorous Standards and Assessments:** The continued and expanded implementation of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math has led to improved instruction and student learning in many classrooms across the state.<sup>8</sup> The Tennessee Department of Education provided teachers with access to professional learning opportunities on these standards, equipping teachers with a better understanding of the standards and the instructional shifts necessary to improve students' mastery of the standards.<sup>9</sup> Since 2012, the Tennessee Department of Education has trained over 63,000 teachers on the new standards.<sup>10</sup>

While these are notable areas of improvement, the delayed implementation of an aligned, college and career ready assessment was a significant setback for students and educators across the state. New standards set higher expectations for what students should know and be able to do, but aligned assessments make those expectations concrete, establishing measurable goals for teachers and students to work toward. Tennessee's continued implementation of Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments that are not fully aligned with academic standards in English language arts and math sent mixed signals to teachers and students about what they are expected to teach and learn.

**Strengthening Schools through Effective Leadership:** In 2014, the principal evaluation was revised to reflect evidence-based best practices in instructional leadership. This revised principal evaluation is being implemented for the first time in 2014-15.<sup>11</sup> This evaluation provides school leaders with the opportunity to receive critical feedback throughout their careers and for district leaders to more fully understand the needs of principals in their schools.

While the principal evaluation is an important component of the principal pipeline, gaps in preparation and support practices persist in Tennessee. Gaps in the quality of principal preparation programs produce challenges in districts' ability to fill vacancies with highly effective school leaders. Further, gaps in principal support practices make it difficult for current principals to grow as instructional leaders and more effectively meet teacher and student needs.

**Expanding Student Access to Great Teaching:** After three years of implementation, the teacher evaluation process underwent additional revisions based on feedback collected from teachers and school leaders. School leaders also continued to receive support on the implementation of classroom observations through the Tennessee Department of Education's professional learning opportunities for principals.<sup>12</sup>

The Tennessee Department of Education developed a new Educator Preparation Policy that focuses more heavily on preparation programs' recruitment and selection strategies, the nature of clinical experiences in preparation programs, and the impact preparation programs have on the long-term effectiveness of teachers once they enter the classroom.<sup>13</sup> This policy reflects a key recommendation from SCORE's *2013-14 State of Education in Tennessee* report and should lead to the creation of a stronger pipeline of effective teachers for Tennessee's schools. While this policy lays the foundation for improvements in the teacher pipeline, it is important to ensure that this policy is implemented effectively. Additionally, it is critical to continue to fill in existing gaps in teacher support practices to ensure current teachers have the resources they need to continually improve their instruction and meet student needs.

**Investing in Technology to Enhance Instruction:** Many districts and schools around the state expanded teacher and student access to technology, not only to prepare for technology-based assessments, but also to improve instruction and learning in classrooms. Some schools and districts increased access to technology through one-to-one models, providing every student with access to at least one device at school. Additionally, some schools are implementing "bring your own device" policies, allowing students to use personal devices in the classroom to support their learning. Even so, there continue to be significant gaps in access to technology both between and within districts. This has significant implications for districts, as the state plans to transition to technology-based assessments in the coming years.

**Supporting Students from Kindergarten to Career:** In 2014, Governor Bill Haslam launched the Tennessee Promise, offering two years of tuition-free community or technical college to all students who graduate from Tennessee high

## SCORE'S 2014 LISTENING TOUR

To ensure this report reflects the views and experiences of educators, SCORE sought the input of hundreds of education stakeholders across Tennessee through focus groups and one-on-one interviews. In particular, the voices of teachers and school leaders are key to understanding the successes and challenges schools experience in the implementation of state-level policies. This year, SCORE sought the input of over 130 teachers and principals in more than 20 focus groups held in eight different cities around the state. Through these focus groups, SCORE aimed to gain a better understanding of successes and challenges related to the state's priorities in 2014 and to gather feedback that helped inform priorities for the 2014-15 report.

To ensure accuracy, SCORE recorded each focus group and analyzed each group's data to better understand overall themes and trends in the comments by teachers and principals. Focus group questions centered on participants' experiences with policies and programs related to the five priorities outlined in SCORE's *2013-14 State of Education in Tennessee* report.

While these focus groups are a key component of SCORE's work and provide insight into the experiences of educators in schools on the ground, it is important to note that the themes gleaned from these focus groups are reflective of a sample of Tennessee teachers and school leaders. Therefore, it is important to continually seek the feedback of educators in different contexts throughout the school year to better understand how state-level policies and programs impact student learning in schools and classrooms.





schools.<sup>14</sup> The Tennessee Promise is one of many components of the Governor's Drive to 55 initiative, which aims to increase the percentage of Tennesseans with a college degree or certificate from the current rate of 29.5 percent to 55 percent by 2025.<sup>15</sup>

The Tennessee Department of Education is investing in initiatives to improve student access to rigorous coursework such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses through expanded dual credit opportunities and online learning.<sup>16</sup> This year, the Tennessee Department of Education, in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Michigan, received a \$2 million grant from the Institute for Education Sciences (IES). This grant will fund a five-year study on the impact of Tennessee's new dual-credit policy, which allows students to earn college credit for advanced math courses taken in high school.<sup>17</sup>

The Tennessee Department of Education also revised the Career and Technical Education (CTE) standards in order to provide students with access to courses that will better prepare them for success in college and career. This standards revision process took place in two phases. The first phase aimed to improve the alignment of CTE programs to postsecondary opportunities. This phase was completed in 2012 and implemented in the 2013-14 school year. During the second phase, course standards were reviewed and revised and new courses were developed to ensure that all CTE courses provided students with rigorous and relevant learning opportunities. The second phase was completed in 2013 and implemented in the 2014-15 school year.<sup>18</sup>

The policies and initiatives described above and throughout this report have all contributed to Tennessee's unprecedented growth in student achievement over the past several years. Even so, it is important to continue pressing forward in Tennessee's efforts to prepare all students for success in college and career. While recent NAEP data indicate that Tennessee

students are showing growth in both math and reading, these and other data also indicate that students are still behind their peers in other states and countries. Only 19 percent of students met all four college readiness benchmarks on the ACT and Tennessee ranks 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 states where 75 percent or more students take the ACT.<sup>19</sup>

These are all indicators that while Tennessee made great strides in student learning over the past several years, there is work left to be done. This report will provide an update on the state's work in education over the past year, highlighting both successes and challenges faced in districts and schools across Tennessee. This report also sets forth four central priorities for Tennessee's education efforts in 2015. As previously noted, these priorities represent a framework that can guide work in the year ahead for all education partners in Tennessee, from teachers to policymakers. These priorities include the following:

- › *Select and implement high-quality assessments that are nationally benchmarked and aligned to Tennessee's State Standards.*
- › *Ensure the continued and improved implementation of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.*
- › *Elevate the teaching profession in Tennessee to ensure that high-quality candidates pursue a career in education and that Tennessee's current teachers receive the support they need to improve student learning.*
- › *Transform instruction through high-quality school leadership that meets local needs.*

Each of these priority areas will include specific recommendations for strategies and areas of work for different individuals, groups, and organizations that will contribute to continued growth in student learning in Tennessee. The report concludes with an overview of district, state, and national education data and a glossary of key education terms.

# TENNESSEE'S TRANSITION TO COLLEGE AND CAREER READY ASSESSMENTS



## OVERVIEW:

With the launch of the Tennessee Diploma Project in 2008 and the General Assembly's passage of the First to the Top Act in 2010, Tennessee has prioritized and invested in efforts to ensure that Tennessee students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. These efforts include a transition to a set of college and career ready academic standards in English language arts and math that support higher expectations for student learning across the state. While academic standards set expectations about what students should know and be able to do, assessments make those expectations concrete, establishing how students demonstrate what they know and can do. Without an aligned assessment, it is difficult to gauge student progress on academic standards, leaving teachers without the information they need to guide their instruction and effectively meet student needs. To ensure students in Tennessee are progressing toward college and career readiness, a high-quality assessment, aligned to Tennessee's State Standards must be in place.<sup>20</sup>

High-quality assessments should guide the instruction of teachers, help students and parents to measure student progress on standards, and support students' development of the skills and competencies the workforce demands.<sup>21</sup> To do so, assessments not only need to cover the standards taught in classrooms, but also need to do so at the right level of difficulty. In order to be well-aligned, assessments should cover the full range of standards, which includes skills that are traditionally hard to measure such as writing, listening, and speaking. Assessments should also cover standards at the level of rigor, or cognitive demand, required by the standards. For example, if a standard requires students to be able to solve a mathematics problem using different strategies and to explain each strategy used, the assessment task has to match that standard. A multiple choice test item may not capture the required cognitive demand of this standard, whereas an open-ended response might.

Recent research on other states' assessments calls into question whether the many assessments used over the last decade accurately measure student mastery of academic standards.<sup>22</sup> This research found gaps in alignment between states' academic standards and standardized assessments, both in terms of content and rigor.<sup>23</sup> These analyses found that on average, less than 60 percent of the content found on state assessments was aligned with the expectations set in states' grade-level standards.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, these analyses found that 15 percent of items in English language arts and 26 percent of items in math were less rigorous than the academic standards and were therefore not an accurate measure of learning.<sup>25</sup>

If a topic or skill is not covered on an assessment, educators often spend less time addressing it in their instruction. Research indicates that a misalignment between standards and assessments often leads to a narrowing of instruction to tested topics and reduced instruction on rarely tested skills such as writing, oral communication, extended problem solving, and research and investigation.<sup>26</sup> If standards are assessed at lower levels of difficulty, it can lead to less rigorous instruction. Additionally, if state assessments are not reflective of the state standards teachers are required to teach in their classrooms, the information assessments provide students, parents, teachers, school and district leaders, and policymakers could be an inaccurate representation of students' progress toward college and career readiness.

## UPDATE ON THE WORK:

Over the course of the implementation of education assessment in Tennessee, Tennessee's standardized assessments have been found to lack alignment to academic standards both in terms of content covered and the level of cognitive demand of testing items. Additionally, state assessments were often criticized because of their exclusive reliance on multiple choice and short answer items.<sup>27</sup> While these as-

assessments served important purposes in Tennessee's districts and schools, they often failed to provide teachers with instructionally useful data and often failed to measure students' mastery of the skills needed to succeed in college and career. For this reason, when new, college and career ready standards were implemented in Tennessee, the Tennessee Department of Education took advantage of this opportunity and planned to implement an aligned, high-quality assessment in the 2014-15 school year.

During the 2014 legislative session, Senate Bill 1835/ House Bill 1549 delayed the implementation of an aligned, college and career-ready assessment which was set to replace the current TCAP assessments in English language arts and math in the 2014-15 school year. This legislation also called for a request for proposal for a new assessment system to be selected through a competitive bidding process.<sup>28</sup> This delay in implementation of a college and career ready assessment had significant implications for teachers and students in classrooms around the state.

In November 2014, the state announced that Measurement, Inc. will provide the new statewide assessment, which will be called TNReady. While the selection of the TNReady assessment is an important step in the right direction, there is still work to be done. Now that the TNReady assessment has been selected, it is imperative that this assessment is implemented effectively and that teachers and students are provided with the supports they need to make a successful transition to a new assessment. Additionally, it is important to work toward continual improvement of the assessment to ensure that it is high-quality and well-aligned to Tennessee's State Standards.

## FORMATIVE AND 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 TCAPs or EOCs are examples of summative assessments given in Tennessee. Formative assessments are 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.



**The Transition to College and Career Ready Assessments:** As Tennessee prepared for the transition to new assessments, expected to be implemented in the 2014-15 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education provided schools the opportunity to pilot assessments that reflected the rigor and content of college and career ready tests. The

following tables illustrate the assessments the state offered during the 2013-14 school year. Table 1 outlines required assessments, while Table 2 outlines assessments that were optional, allowing schools and districts to determine which assessments would be most helpful to improving instruction and learning in their classrooms.

Required Assessments

ASSESSMENT	WHAT DOES IT ASSESS?	HOW IS IT USED?
TCAP Achievement Test	The TCAP Achievement test is required for students in grades 3-8. It is a timed, multiple-choice assessment that measures student skills in math, reading, language arts, science, and social studies. <sup>29</sup>	The TCAP assessment is used to measure student progress on Tennessee's State Standards. Data from this assessment is used to better understand student needs, to measure teaching effectiveness, to determine reward and priority schools, and to inform school improvement efforts. <sup>30</sup>
High School End of Course	High school end of course examinations are given in English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, Algebra II, U.S. History, Biology I, and Chemistry. <sup>31</sup>	The results from these assessments account for 25 percent of students' final grades in these subjects. Additionally, data from these assessments are used to measure teaching effectiveness, to determine reward and priority schools, and to inform school improvement efforts. <sup>32</sup>
Social Studies Assessment	The State Board of Education approved new social studies standards in July 2014. These standards were piloted in 2013-14 and are being implemented in 2014-15. <sup>33</sup> For this reason, in January 2014 the State Board approved a plan for transitioning to a new social studies assessment that would align with these new standards. <sup>34</sup>	In the 2014-15 school year, a new social studies assessment will be piloted across the state. During this pilot year, scores from the social studies assessments will not factor into teacher evaluation scores and the assessment will be fully implemented in the 2015-16 school year. <sup>35</sup>
Writing Assessment	The online writing assessment was required for students in grades 5, 8, and 11. In the 2014-15 school year, the writing assessment is required for all students in grades 3-11. The writing assessment measures student progress toward key skillsets in writing.	Since writing is an important component of Tennessee's State Standards, this assessment provides an important measure of student progress toward mastery of key skillsets across subjects. Each writing assessment consists of two complex texts that students respond to in two written essays. Additionally, the writing assessment requires students to cite evidence from texts to justify their conclusions. While scores from these assessments do not factor into teacher evaluations or student grades, they provide students and teachers with exposure to the kinds of writing tasks that will be included on new college and career ready assessments. <sup>36</sup>
ACT	The ACT is required for all students in 11 <sup>th</sup> grade in Tennessee and is an assessment of college readiness.	The ACT is used to assess students' progress toward college and career readiness and is also an important measure of high school effectiveness in Tennessee.

Table 1



## Optional Assessments

ASSESSMENT	WHAT DOES THIS ASSESS?	HOW IS IT USED?
K-2 Assessment	The K-2 assessment is an optional assessment that districts can use to assess math and reading in the early grades. <sup>37</sup>	The K-2 assessment assesses basic skills in math and reading, providing a benchmark of how students are progressing on the foundational skills they need for success in later grades. <sup>38</sup>
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. This allowed districts that valued the instructional data they received from the CRA to continue implementation, while other districts could opt out of implementation and rededicate that time to instruction.	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. While the results from these assessments did not factor into teacher evaluations or student grades, they provided teachers and students with valuable information about their progress on the new standards. <sup>39</sup>
Writing Assessment	The online writing assessment was available for students in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 in the 2013-14 school year.	While the online writing assessment was required for students in grades 5, 8, and 11, it was optional for students in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10. As noted above, this provided teachers and students valuable experience with the type of writing tasks that will be present on new, college and career ready assessments. <sup>40</sup>
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Pilot	The PARCC pilot was optional and was only implemented in a select number of districts and schools across the state in 2014. PARCC assesses student mastery of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math.	Tennessee planned to implement the PARCC assessment in the 2014-15 school year. For this reason, a representative sample of students, schools, and districts piloted the PARCC assessment in spring 2014. This pilot was meant to provide schools with experience on the new assessment and to inform further improvements to testing items. <sup>41</sup>

Table 2

The optional assessments in Table 2 were intended to support teachers and students in their transition to new assessments that were planned to be implemented in the 2014-15 school year. While the state's current TCAP assessments consist mostly of multiple-choice questions focused more on procedural skills and recall of information, these optional assessments included more rigorous questions that required extended written responses and reflected the new skills emphasized in Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math.

**Technology-Based Assessments:** The writing assessment and PARCC pilot also provided schools with an opportunity to pilot online assessments. During SCORE's 2014 Listening Tour, teachers and principals provided feedback on the assessments implemented in their schools. Many teachers and principals noted significant challenges surrounding the online administration of these assessments, indicating some technical issues with the assessment itself, inadequate infrastructure, and inadequate access to technology. Teachers and principals also often noted concern around students' preparedness for technology-based assessments, expressing a need for additional student instruction in technology and keyboarding skills. This concern was particularly prevalent in the early grades. While the majority of educators were concerned about the transition to technology-based assessments, some teachers indicated that their students were more engaged when using technology and had the technology skills they needed to succeed on these assessments.<sup>42</sup> This diverse feedback is indicative of the gaps that exist in access to and familiarity with technology across the state.

**Delay of an Aligned Assessment:** While the assessments in Tables 1 and 2 provide useful insights into students' progress on Tennessee's State Standards, the misalignment between

the standards in English language arts and math and current TCAP assessments continues to challenge teachers, students, and principals across the state. As noted earlier, Senate Bill 1835/House Bill 1549 delayed the implementation of an aligned, college and career ready assessment, which was scheduled to replace the current TCAP assessment in English language arts and math in spring 2015.

This piece of legislation called for a request for proposal (RFP) for a new assessment system that would be selected through a competitive bidding process, managed by Tennessee's Procurement Office.<sup>43</sup> The RFP was issued in July 2014, and any assessment vendor throughout the country was eligible to apply. It established application guidelines for vendors and provided criteria illustrating how each assessment would be evaluated. These guidelines and criteria reflect best practices in assessment design and reflect the needs and values of Tennessee educators. The RFP established that the contract would be awarded to the vendor that could most effectively meet the assessment needs of Tennessee schools.<sup>44</sup>

Although districts have fully implemented Tennessee's State Standards, schools will continue to implement current TCAP assessments in spring 2015 as a result of the 2014 legislation. While many teachers participated in state trainings on the new standards and made significant changes in their instruction to meet the demands of the new standards, many note that the current misalignment between the standards and assessment has created confusion about what should be taught in classrooms. The Tennessee Department of Education narrowed the standards covered on the TCAP assessment in the 2013-14 school year to more closely align with the content of the standards. Even so, many teachers on SCORE's 2014 Listening Tour expressed concern that current TCAP assessments measure different skills and competencies than are currently present in Tennessee's State Standards.<sup>45</sup>

## MAKING ASSESSMENTS MATTER

Assessments allow Kayleigh Wettstein, a third-grade English Language Learner (ELL) teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary in Metro Nashville Public Schools, to evaluate her own instruction and better understand her students' needs. Data from formative assessments give Ms. Wettstein a real-time view of how her instruction supports student learning, helping her make informed choices about concepts and topics needing to be retaught. She is also able to identify students who would benefit from extra help in certain subjects. "Assessments are really important to show where students are and provide data that show us how students are growing throughout the year," Ms. Wettstein explains.<sup>46</sup> Both formative and summative assessments are important tools in Ms. Wettstein's school and classroom.

Since the implementation of new standards in math and English language arts, Ms. Wettstein has changed the way she assesses students in her classroom. She used to align her assessments with the TCAP, giving her students mostly multiple choice tests. Now, Ms. Wettstein's assessments only have one or two multiple choice questions. The rest of the questions require students to cite evidence from texts and to explain their thinking in writing. Ms.

Wettstein thinks that state summative assessments need to make a similar shift in order for teachers to have the information they need to help students. Ms. Wettstein explains, "Assessments will help us make sure that we are giving students the skills they need to succeed in college and in their careers. In order to make really great instructional decisions, you need to know how your students are performing."<sup>47</sup>

While Ms. Wettstein has always used data from statewide summative assessments to make instructional decisions, she notes the challenge she is facing this year with the continued implementation of a TCAP assessment that isn't fully aligned to the standards she is teaching in her classroom. Ms. Wettstein explains, "The summative assessments need to be aligned to our state standards and have questions and tasks that are similar to what we're doing in the classroom every day. Otherwise, it's not really measuring what students are learning."<sup>48</sup> As Ms. Wettstein looks forward to the implementation of a high-quality, aligned assessment, she hopes it will require students to think deeply about concepts, to analyze information, to think critically, and to cite evidence from complex texts.<sup>49</sup>





## PRIORITIES FOR 2015: IMPLEMENT COLLEGE AND CAREER READY ASSESSMENTS

**Select and implement high-quality assessments that are nationally benchmarked and aligned to Tennessee's State Standards.** While the implementation of rigorous standards is an important step toward ensuring Tennessee students are prepared for college and career, it is difficult for students and educators to measure progress on those standards without a high-quality, well-aligned assessment. The purpose of educational assessment is to provide educators, parents, and students with information that helps them better understand students' strengths and opportunities for growth. This information allows teachers to more effectively meet students' unique needs and to recognize opportunities for instructional improvement. In 2015, it is critically important to select and implement assessments that align to state standards and provide educators, parents, and students with accurate information about students' progress toward college and career readiness.

1. **Statewide Summative Assessments:** *Implement a high-quality statewide assessment aligned to Tennessee's State Standards in English Language Arts and Math.* Now that a new summative assessment, called TNReady, has been selected, it is necessary to ensure that a new assessment is implemented as scheduled, without further delay in the 2015-16 school year and that preparations for implementation begin as soon as possible. In addition, it is important to push for continuous improvement on the selected assessment, assuring that it is high-quality, well-aligned to Tennessee's State Standards, and that the vendor has plans to assess rarely tested skills such as speaking and listening.

It is also important for Tennessee education partners to lead effective communications efforts on the new assessment to diverse stakeholders around the state. The Tennessee Department of Education should initiate these communication efforts by providing clear and transparent information about the new assessment to district leaders who should share this information with school leaders and their communities. Finally, school leaders should ensure that teachers and parents have a clear understanding of how the new assessment will impact learning and instruction in classrooms.

The Tennessee Department of Education with the support of CORE offices and individual school district offices should provide comprehensive professional learning opportunities to school leaders and teachers on the new assessment. The Tennessee Department of Education should do so through a model similar to that used to train educators on Tennessee's new standards, empowering Core Coaches to serve again as instructional leaders during the transition to a new assessment. These professional learning opportunities should help school leaders and teachers better understand how best to prepare students for success on the assessment. They should also provide school leaders and teachers with the resources they need to understand how to use data from this assessment to support instructional improvement.

In order for summative assessments to provide educators with the information they need, the selected summative assessment in English language arts and math should yield data that is reflective of a teacher's instruction and should be reported in a way that is easy for diverse audiences to understand. In this respect, it is important for data from summative assessments to be provided in a timely manner and for assessments to be transparent. Data from assessments should provide teachers with specific information about what concepts individual students or groups of students were successful with and where they faced challenges. It is critical for school district leadership, the Tennessee Department of Education, and parent organizations to ensure the reports resulting from summative assessments provide school leaders, teachers, and parents with the information they need to support improved student learning.

2. **Formative Assessments:** *Support districts and schools in their selection of high-quality formative assessments that are aligned to Tennessee's State Standards.* While summative assessments provide important feedback to teachers and students about growth and progress achieved at the end of the school year, formative assessments provide this information to teachers throughout the school year. For this reason, it is important for CORE offices to provide district and school leaders with support in their selection of formative assessments to ensure they are aligned to Tennessee's State Standards and provide educators with the information they need to improve student learning. This support could be provided through professional learning opportunities on formative assessments or through the creation of tools or databases that districts could use in their selection of

formative assessments. Through these supports, there is also an opportunity to reduce the number of assessments implemented at the district and school levels, evaluating the quality of formative assessments and eliminating assessments that are duplicative or unnecessary.

District leaders and CORE offices should ensure that the formative assessments districts select provide principals, teachers, and parents with instructionally useful data. These data must be reported in a timely manner and provide easy-to-understand information about a student's academic progress throughout the school year. Data reports from formative assessments should not only provide detailed information on a student's overall academic progress in different subjects, but the reports should also provide detailed information about student progress on different concepts covered within subject areas.

3. **Assessment Study:** *Conduct a study on the landscape of assessment in Tennessee, highlighting effective district assessment practices and gathering information on the amount of testing that occurs in districts around the state.* The results of this study should support movement toward a goal of having fewer, better assessments. Over the past several years, there has been increased discussion both in Tennessee and around the country about the amount of testing that occurs in schools. While this is an important issue, it is important to more fully understand the landscape of assessment in districts throughout Tennessee before implementing policy changes related to this issue. For this reason, SCORE should conduct a study that aims to provide additional insight into assessment practices in districts and provides more comprehensive information on the amount of testing implemented in different districts around the state. This study should highlight best practices in assessment selection and implementation, providing district leaders throughout Tennessee with actionable recommendations for improved assessment practices in their schools.

4. **Community Engagement:** *Implement a state-level communications campaign that engages and informs the public on the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments.* As a new assessment is selected and implemented, it is important to engage and educate the public on that assessment, highlighting the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments as well as providing transparent information about the selected assessment to diverse stakeholders. It is especially important to engage parents in conversations about what a new assessment means for their children and how a more rigorous assessment helps to ensure higher expectations for all students.

SCORE and its partners can play an important role in these efforts by launching a statewide communications campaign in the summer of 2015 that engages and informs parents and the public on the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments. SCORE should also empower partners in communities around the state to engage in local communications campaigns that inform communities on the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments. Additionally, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission is poised to play a unique role, assisting higher education institutions in engaging the public and their partners on the importance of high-quality, aligned assessments to the higher education community.

5. **Technology:** *Provide support to districts to ensure they have access to the infrastructure and training needed to effectively implement technology-based assessments and enhance student learning.* In order for the state to successfully transition to technology-based assessments, Tennessee foundations, business partners, and CORE offices should support district leaders in their efforts to upgrade technological infrastructure and access in their schools. Additionally, districts must prioritize schools' efforts to provide students with early instruction on technology and keyboarding skills to prepare them for technology-based assessments and success in college and career.



Across Tennessee, teachers and school leaders are using data from assessments to provide individualized instruction to every student. These schools and districts use information from assessments to ensure all students have an opportunity for success.

**Using Assessment Data and Technology to Support Instruction.** Maryville City Schools, a district of approximately 5,000 students in East Tennessee, is leveraging technology to implement a comprehensive formative assessment system. The district's iREACH initiative launched in fall 2013, with the goal of infusing technology in the classroom to support online assessments and enhance teaching and learning. Maryville's technology investments allow teachers and school leaders to use a robust formative assessment program to support improved student learning. This technology-based formative assessment program provides teachers with timely and meaningful data that allows them to shift their instruction throughout the school year to better meet student needs.



## PRIORITIES IN ACTION: USING DATA AND ASSESSMENTS TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

**Leveraging Assessments and Data to Implement Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI<sup>2</sup>).** Hillsboro Elementary/Middle School, a K-8 school located in Middle Tennessee, is serving as a districtwide model for how to incorporate RTI<sup>2</sup> into daily schedules in middle school. First, the school uses formative assessments including STAR Reading and Math and AIMSweb to identify students in need of intervention or enrichment. Then, the school uses a second related arts block to provide time for intervention and enrichment for students. Some students may receive enrichment two days a week, while others may receive remediation-focused intervention three or five days a week. When students are not in intervention or enrichment, they are in a related arts "minor," which includes physical education, computer, guitar, and other activities.

In addition to the intervention/enrichment block, Hillsboro faculty employ a number of strategies that leverage the formative assessment data they collect through RTI<sup>2</sup>. Hillsboro's strategies include:

- › *Data meetings every six weeks to review RTI<sup>2</sup> data and discuss intervention or enrichment approaches.*
- › *Ongoing intervention and remediation to students identified through assessment and progress monitoring.*
- › *Ongoing professional learning opportunities for three hours per month to provide training in best practices for instruction and strategies to improve student learning.*
- › *Administering quarterly benchmarks to monitor student progress.*

At Hillsboro, data garnered from formative and summative assessments guide the school's individualized approach to student learning.



# THE CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STANDARDS



## OVERVIEW:

In 2008, the State Board of Education approved the Tennessee Diploma Project Standards, followed by the approval of Tennessee's Common Core State Standards in 2010. The overriding goal of these standards was to ensure that all students in Tennessee would graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. In addition, these new standards were intended to serve the following purposes:

- ▶ *To ensure academic standards in Tennessee were better aligned with expectations for success in college and career.*
- ▶ *To create fewer standards that were more rigorous, allowed students to understand concepts in greater depth, and helped students develop critical thinking skills.*
- ▶ *To adopt standards that were nationally benchmarked, allowing Tennessee students and parents to understand their progress toward college and career readiness as compared to students in other states around the country.<sup>50</sup>*

These new standards emphasize skills and competencies students need to compete in the global workforce including critical thinking skills and greater depth of content knowledge. Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math create more opportunities for cross-curricular instruction, encouraging students to apply knowledge learned in one subject area to tasks in other subject areas. They also set higher expectations for student learning and call for significant instructional shifts to occur in classrooms. Research has found that these standards have greater coherence than previous state standards, progressing more logically from one topic to another. This coherence more effectively ensures that students establish mastery in foundational concepts before progressing further in course content.<sup>51</sup> For example, students may progress from learning multiplication and division to learning how to solve algebraic equations that require students to use multiplication and division. These standards also focus on fewer concepts, allowing students to develop greater depth of content knowledge across

key subject areas.<sup>52</sup> Finally, research has found these standards align more closely to the standards of high-achieving countries around the world.<sup>53</sup>

Tennessee's success depends on its ability to compete in a global economy, with the state's education system playing a key role in preparing students to meet the growing demands of the workforce.<sup>54</sup> The adoption and implementation of new, more rigorous standards in English language arts and math laid the foundation for improved instruction and student learning in Tennessee. These academic standards aligned the expectations for student achievement in Tennessee with the expectations of other high-performing states and countries and with the skills needed for student success in college and career.

## UPDATE ON THE WORK:

Since Tennessee adopted new academic standards in 2010, the Tennessee Department of Education provided guidance to districts on the implementation of the new standards. In the 2011-12 school year, the new standards in English language arts and math were implemented in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. In the 2012-13 school year, all districts in Tennessee implemented the new math standards in grades 3-8 and 60 of those districts piloted the new standards in English language arts. In the 2013-14 school year, the new standards were fully implemented in all subjects and all grades. The following section provides an overview of recent policy and legislative change related to Tennessee's academic standards and highlights both successes and challenges faced in the implementation of the standards in classrooms.

**Recent Legislative Change:** During the 2014 legislative session, there were several attempts to repeal or delay the implementation of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math. The combined efforts of Tennessee education partners and many policymakers helped to prevent most of these pieces of legislation from passing. In addition, Senate

Bill 1835/House Bill 1549 reaffirmed Tennessee's sovereignty over academic standards, created more protections for student data with the implementation of a new assessment, and prevented the adoption of standards that were developed by a consortium of states in subjects beyond English language arts and math.<sup>55</sup> This piece of legislation addressed many of the concerns opponents of Tennessee's State Standards voiced during the legislative session.

**Professional Learning Opportunities:** As the new standards were implemented, the Tennessee Department of Education provided extensive professional learning opportunities for teachers on the new standards. In 2013, the Tennessee Department of Education replicated the training model used in 2012 and selected an additional 700 educators to serve as Core Coaches. These coaches went through extensive training that prepared them to lead professional learning on the new standards for thousands of educators around the state. Since 2012, over 63,000 educators have been trained on the new standards.<sup>56</sup> During SCORE's Listening Tour, many teachers cited these professional learning opportunities as being more helpful than most other state-level trainings they have attended.<sup>57</sup>

In 2013-14, the Tennessee Department of Education offered additional professional learning opportunities for teachers in reading instruction, reading intervention, math instruction, and math intervention. The Tennessee Department of Education also offered professional learning opportunities for school leaders on the standards. These professional learning opportunities provided school leaders with a deeper understanding of how to lead teachers toward improved instruction of the standards. In the 2014-15 school year, the Tennessee Department of Education is offering professional learning opportunities for teams of teachers to attend. These teams of teachers are expected to bring their learnings back to other teachers in their schools and districts. These professional learning opportunities focus on math, literacy, and success in the early grades.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to state-level trainings, some districts are providing teachers with additional opportunities for professional learning on the standards. Some districts have used their teacher leader models to provide additional training and coaching on the standards, empowering teacher leaders to provide professional learning opportunities for their colleagues or to coach their colleagues on implementation of the standards in the classroom.

## THE PUSH FOR HIGHER STANDARDS

As a veteran math teacher at Dobyns-Bennett High School in Kingsport City Schools, Valerie Love can speak to the impact higher standards are having in Tennessee classrooms. Ms. Love was a Core Coach with the Tennessee Department of Education and has received continued support from leaders in her district on the implementation of new standards. "The way we've been supported to make instructional shifts in our classrooms and the opportunity we've had to collaborate with Core Coaches across the state has made such a big difference," Ms. Love says.<sup>59</sup>

Ms. Love was entering her 17<sup>th</sup> year teaching when she became a Core Coach. Much has changed in those years, and Ms. Love feels she is a different teacher now than when she entered the classroom. "The way we develop student understanding and the depth we go into with the standards was new for me," Ms. Love says.<sup>60</sup> Implementation of Tennessee's State Standards in Ms. Love's Algebra I classroom has prompted Ms. Love to make significant changes in the way she teaches math. She asks her students to explain and justify their answers more frequently, and asks her students to complete higher level tasks on a regular basis in her classroom.

As a result of the changes, Ms. Love says her students are making meaningful connections between concepts and getting a better glimpse of the big picture. "They can understand why

they are doing what they are doing," Ms. Love says. "In the past, they just looked at the problem and the answer. Now, they are more capable of making sense of information and understanding concepts on a deeper level."<sup>61</sup> Students in Ms. Love's classroom are also more able to communicate their thinking about math both verbally and in writing.

Ms. Love also notes that the new standards have encouraged more effective and instructionally focused collaboration between teachers at her school. While teachers used to collaborate mainly with other teachers who taught the same grade or subject, teachers now collaborate with teachers in different grade levels and subject areas. "The new standards have allowed us to come out of our rooms and work together to create a stronger learning environment for our students," Ms. Love says.<sup>62</sup>



**Learning Materials:** Through TNCore.org, the Tennessee Department of Education worked to support teachers by providing instructional resources aligned to Tennessee's State Standards. Through this website, Tennessee teachers can access sample unit plans and assessment items that they can use or adapt for use in their own classrooms.<sup>63</sup> While these resources provide teachers with a foundational set of learning materials to use in their classrooms, many teachers and principals note a need for guidance on the selection of additional instructional materials that are aligned to Tennessee's State Standards, such as textbooks and curricula.<sup>64</sup>

In 2014, the Tennessee Department of Education partnered with the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh through a \$2.5 million grant focused on professional learning opportunities for grades 3-8 math teachers. During the three-year grant, researchers will look to build on the training model the Tennessee Department of Education implemented with Tennessee's State Standards to create high-quality, ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers throughout the year.<sup>65</sup>

**Shifts in Instruction and Learning:** Since implementing Tennessee's State Standards, many teachers and principals have witnessed significant shifts in instruction and student learning in classrooms around the state. During SCORE's Listening Tour, many teachers and principals noted an increase in students' use of evidence to justify their thinking and a greater depth of knowledge for students across content areas. Some teachers noted their instruction has improved as a result of implementing Tennessee's State Standards, including setting higher expectations for student thinking in their classrooms through improved questioning and more engaging instruction. Finally, many teachers and principals discussed a general shift toward student-centered instruction in classrooms, with teachers more often serving as a facilitator of learning rather than a director of learning.<sup>66</sup>

**Public Review of 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. Academic standards in Tennessee are typically reviewed every six years. As a result of current discussion on the standards, Governor Haslam expressed his desire to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, particularly teachers, to share feedback on the standards after four years of implementation. Governor Haslam emphasized that the goal of this process is to maintain high standards for Tennessee students stating, "This discussion is about making sure we have the best possible standards as we continue to push ahead on the historic progress we're making in academic achievement."<sup>67</sup> This process is taking place in two phases. In early November 2014, a website was launched where all Tennesseans can go online to review each state standard and provide feedback on positive aspects of the standard or opportunities for improvement to the standard.<sup>68</sup>

During phase two of this process, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) will collect and compile data from the public review process in the spring of 2015. This data will be shared with committees of Tennessee educators who will review and analyze this information, making recommendations for possible changes to the standards to the State Board of Education. Governor Haslam requested that the State Board of Education appoint two committees, an English Language Arts Standards Review & Development Committee and a Math Standards Review & Development Committee, as well as three advisory teams for each of the committees. The committees consist of six K-12 educators and two representatives from Tennessee higher education institutions.<sup>69</sup>





## PRIORITIES FOR 2015: ENSURE A CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STANDARDS

**Ensure the continued and improved implementation of Tennessee's State Standards.** Tennessee's State Standards are now implemented across all grades statewide. To continue to hold all students to high academic standards, it is important to ensure that the current public review process of the standards is focused on continuous improvement and results in higher standards for Tennessee students, not lower standards. To ensure the standards reach all students, continued support for teachers and school leaders is critical as they work to integrate the new standards into their daily practice. The professional development opportunities that the Tennessee Department of Education provided for thousands of teachers and school leaders over the past two years laid an important foundation for the successful implementation of Tennessee's State Standards. Even so, these opportunities should be offered to additional teachers and school leaders around the state, providing more educators with the resources they need to successfully transition to the new standards. It is also important to continue to engage parents and community members on the standards, educating the larger public on what the standards are and why they are important to Tennessee students' academic growth.

1. **Commitment to High Standards:** *Ensure the public review process of Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math results in equally high or higher standards for students.* Over the past four years, Tennesseans have seen that when academic standards set high expectations for students, they reach higher levels of achievement. In order to maintain this growth in student achievement, Tennessee must maintain high expectations for all students through rigorous academic standards. As Tennessee continues the public review process of Tennessee's State Standards, it is essential to ensure that this review process results in equally high or higher standards for Tennessee students. Additionally, policymakers should refrain from passing legislation changing the state's standards while this process is ongoing.

In order for the review process to result in recommendations that reflect the needs of students and teachers, it is essential for those closest to the classroom to share their perspectives on the strengths of the standards as well as opportunities for improvement. SCORE alongside district leaders, the Tennessee Department of Education, the Tennessee Organization for School Superintendents (TOSS), Leading Innovation for Tennessee Education (LIFT), the Tennessee Education Association (TEA), Professional Educators of Tennessee (PET), Learning Forward Tennessee, and the Tennessee Principals Association (TPA) should empower teachers and principals across the state to review the standards online, centering the conversation on the needs of students.

2. **Teacher and Leader Support:** *Expand professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders on Tennessee's State Standards for English Language Arts and Math, focusing on the instructional practices needed to ensure increased rigor and higher expectations for all Tennessee students.* While the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers and school leaders over the past year were positive experiences for the educators that had the opportunity to participate, many teachers and principals note the need for expanded access to professional learning opportunities on the new standards for additional educators. It is important for the Tennessee Department of Education and local school districts to expand access to professional learning opportunities on Tennessee's State Standards for teachers who have not yet received the training. At the school level, school leaders can continue to empower Core Coaches and instructional coaches to serve as instructional leaders in their schools, providing other teachers with support on the new standards. Tennessee's teacher organizations, TEA, PET, Learning Forward Tennessee, and the TPA, should provide professional learning opportunities aligned with Tennessee's professional learning standards to school leaders and teachers as they continue to transition to new standards.

3. **Community Engagement:** *Continue to implement and expand the reach of the Expect More, Achieve More Coalition's state-level communications campaign that engages and informs the public on Tennessee's State Standards.* As Tennessee schools continue to implement Tennessee's State Standards, it is important to engage parents and the public on the standards, providing them with information about what the standards are and how they will impact students in Tennessee classrooms. The Expect More, Achieve



More Coalition and its partners around the state should expand their state-level communications campaign that engages and educates parents and the public on Tennessee's State Standards. Additionally, the Coalition should empower its partners including school districts, chambers of commerce, education foundations, and civic organizations to engage in communications campaigns at the community level, providing them with the tools they need to engage and educate communities on Tennessee's State Standards.

4. **Learning Materials:** *Expand teacher and student access to high-quality learning materials that are aligned to Tennessee's State Standards. As educators continue*

to implement Tennessee's State Standards, school districts have an important role to play in providing them with support and guidance as they select new learning materials. Having textbooks, instructional technology, and other classroom resources that are aligned to the standards is an essential component of standards implementation. CORE offices, school districts, and the Tennessee Department of Education should work together to create a tool that allows Core Coaches, instructional coaches, and teachers to share resources with one another and provides educators with foundational instructional materials to use in their classrooms.

Across Tennessee, schools and districts are setting higher standards and building partnerships within schools and communities to ensure that students have a deeper understanding of what will be expected of them once they enter college or career. These schools are leaders in these efforts, taking their students to new heights through the implementation of rigorous academic standards.

**Beyond Academic Standards – Expanding Access to AP Courses and Dual Enrollment.**

Covington High School, a school serving over 700 students in grades 9–12 in West Tennessee is embracing Tennessee’s higher academic standards and offering students access to rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement and dual enrollment. Over the past few years, Covington has shown strong growth in Algebra I and II, and recently posted strong gains in English II. The school attributes this success to working together through professional learning communities (PLCs) to ensure that Covington students master the rigorous academic standards put before them. The school has offered numerous professional learning opportunities on Tennessee’s State Standards for teachers, including trainings focused on math, English language arts, and science.



Recently, Covington has taken rigor to the next level by developing community partnerships to provide students with opportunities that will better prepare them for college and the workforce. Covington’s partnerships include a dual enrollment program with Dyersburg State Community College and an internship program with Unilever. Covington now boasts over 100 students in dual enrollment courses with Dyersburg State. Additionally, dozens of students have taken advantage of internship opportunities with Unilever, some of which are leading to high paying jobs following graduation. Covington’s focus on raising academic standards is leading to improved student success in college and career.

**High Academic Standards across the Curriculum.** At Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet High School (MLK), a school serving students in grades 7–12 in Middle Tennessee, teacher collaboration around rigorous academic standards provides students with opportunities to apply their learning in real-world contexts. MLK is well known as a school that has outstanding proficiency and college-going rates – nearly 100 percent of students are proficient in almost every grade and subject. While MLK has a tradition of academic excellence, the faculty continue to work hard to embrace Tennessee’s State Standards and have seen strong growth, particularly in Algebra I and II.

Staff at MLK are engaged in professional learning opportunities that include sessions on analyzing student data, strategies for teaching Tennessee’s State Standards, as well as specific sessions on incorporating informational texts across content areas. When visiting MLK, it is common to see teachers making an intentional effort to integrate content from multiple subject areas into one lesson. For example, students may discuss and write about science concepts in their English language arts class. The faculty of MLK push themselves to work together to provide students with learning experiences that are reflective of work they may encounter in college and in their careers.

## PRIORITIES IN ACTION: CONNECTING TENNESSEE’S STANDARDS TO REAL-WORLD LEARNING



# EXPANDING ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN TENNESSEE



## OVERVIEW:

Teachers have a greater impact on student learning than any other in-school factor.<sup>70</sup> Research finds that high-quality teaching can diminish the impact of a student's low socioeconomic background.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, consecutive years of access to high-quality teaching can boost higher-performing students to perform at even higher levels and accelerate lower-achieving students to catch up to their higher-performing peers.<sup>72</sup> For these reasons, shifts in policy and practice related to teaching quality have the potential to yield large and sustainable improvements in student achievement levels and reduce achievement gaps.

## UPDATE ON THE WORK:

Since 2010, several policy and legislative changes were made in an effort to expand student access to effective teaching. Some examples of these changes include the implementation of a teacher evaluation system that provides all teachers with improved feedback on an annual basis, the offering of professional learning opportunities for teachers on Tennessee's State Standards, and the development of innovative teacher leader models in districts around the state. Policies and programs implemented in the 2013-14 school year are highlighted and described below. While these policy changes have laid the foundation for improved teaching across the state, gaps remain in teacher support practices, access to teacher leadership opportunities, and the quality of teacher preparation programs.

**Teacher Preparation:** The first step in expanding student access to effective teaching is improving the selectivity and quality of teacher preparation programs. Over the past several years, Tennessee has worked to systemically improve educator preparation programs through the development of new standards and program approval processes. Program ap-

proval processes are the legal process by which the state of Tennessee authorizes preparation programs to grant teachers a license. Similar to academic standards for students, standards in preparation programs establish a common set of expectations for educator preparation programs. These standards aim to ensure that programs provide teacher candidates with the knowledge and skillsets they need to succeed once they enter the classroom.

In 2013, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the accrediting body for educator preparation programs in Tennessee, convened a board of experts in teacher preparation to create a new set of standards for preparation programs. When compared to previous standards for educator preparation programs, these standards focus more heavily on the outcomes of educator preparation programs and the impact those programs have on teaching effectiveness once program completers enter the classroom.<sup>73</sup>

As a result of the revisions to the CAEP standards, the Tennessee Department of Education worked with Tennessee stakeholders to revise the current program approval process for educator preparation programs. These revisions better align the program approval process with the new CAEP standards and are encompassed in a new Educator Preparation Policy.<sup>74</sup> The Educator Preparation Policy, passed by the State Board of Education in October 2014, focuses more on preparation programs' recruitment and selection strategies, the nature of clinical experiences, and the impact preparation programs have on the long-term effectiveness of teachers once they enter the classroom.<sup>75</sup> SCORE's *2013-14 State of Education in Tennessee* report called for more selective admissions processes, high-quality clinical experiences, and more rigorous curriculum requirements in teacher preparation programs. In 2013-14, the collaborative efforts of the Tennessee Department of Education and the State Board of Education have laid the foundation for the development of higher quality preparation programs in Tennessee.

Since 2010, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission

(THEC) has published an annual Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs. This report card includes data on program completers' performance on Praxis exams, Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data, and teacher placement and retention rates.<sup>76</sup> Since the initial publication of the report, THEC has worked with teacher training programs, the State Board of Education, the Tennessee Department of Education, and other stakeholders to redesign and improve the report. Based on feedback gathered during these discussions, THEC plans to include data from the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) and other alternative teacher evaluation models in future report cards.<sup>77</sup> These annual report cards have the potential to inform prospective teachers' decisions about where to pursue a degree in education, hiring decisions made at the district and school levels, improvement practices in teacher preparation programs, and policy shifts in teacher preparation at the state level.

**Teacher Evaluation:** In addition to improving the quality of teacher preparation programs, it is critical to provide current teachers with the feedback and support they need to continually improve their instruction. With the passage of the First to the Top Act in 2010, a new teacher evaluation system was put in place.<sup>78</sup> This teacher evaluation system was implemented for the first time in the 2011-12 school year and required teachers to have annual performance evaluations that incorporated measures of student learning. The Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development's (TN-CRED) First to the Top survey found that Tennessee teachers have developed a more favorable view of the teacher evaluation since it was first implemented. For example, the percentage of teachers who felt the teacher evaluation would improve their teaching grew from 38 percent in 2012 to 53 percent in 2014. Additionally, the percentage of teachers who said feedback from the teacher evaluation system is more focused on judgment than on improving teaching decreased from 27 percent in 2012, to 19 percent in 2014.<sup>79</sup>

Teachers who participated in SCORE's 2014 Listening Tour reported similar feedback on the evaluation after three years of implementation, noting that the teacher evaluation promotes more meaningful conversations between teachers and principals.<sup>80</sup> The teacher evaluation system also provides more in-depth and comprehensive information to teachers, principals, district leaders, and policymakers than was previously available, ensuring that decisions ranging from professional learning opportunities to teacher placement can be made with a more robust set of data.

The classroom observation component of the teacher evaluation has elevated principals' role as an instructional leader in their school. Even so, on SCORE's 2014 Listening Tour, some principals and evaluators noted challenges faced in the implementation of the classroom observation.<sup>81</sup> Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) offered additional support to schools on the classroom observation by placing TEAM coaches in schools to train and support evaluators. TEAM coaches worked alongside administrators in these schools, serving as co-observers to ensure evaluators established a deep understanding of the classroom observation rubric. The Tennessee Department of Education found this strategy effectively improved agreement between different evaluators. For this reason, CORE offices will continue to offer schools the support of TEAM coaches in the 2014-15 school year. In addition to school-level supports, TEAM coaches provided district-level and regional support on the implementation of the teacher evaluation.

**TVAAS and the Teacher Evaluation:** A foundational component of the Tennessee teacher evaluation is the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). While other measures of student outcomes included in the teacher evaluation focus on student achievement, TVAAS instead focuses on the amount of growth students make during the school year. Diverse stakeholders such as district leaders, school leaders, and teachers, have voiced concerns related to the



use of TVAAS to measure teaching effectiveness in grades or subject areas that are traditionally not subject to end-of-year assessments. For this reason, the Tennessee Department of Education worked to develop alternative growth measures for these teachers including portfolio-based assessments for teachers of creative arts, physical education, and world language classes. The development of these alternative growth measures has increased the percentage of teachers with individual growth scores from 30 percent to 50 percent.<sup>82</sup>

**Teacher Licensure:** In the 2014 legislative session, House Bill 1375/Senate Bill 2240 passed, indicating that value-added data cannot be used to make a decision to not renew or to revoke a teacher's license.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the State Board of Education passed policies in 2014 that give teachers the option of using their evaluation scores to demonstrate professional learning towards the advancement and renewal of their license.<sup>84</sup>

**Differentiated Pay Plans:** The experiences of districts in Tennessee and in other states indicate that when teacher compensation plans align with strategic goals and priorities, growth toward those strategic goals and priorities is accelerated.<sup>85</sup> In the 2007-08 school year, the State Board of Education passed guidelines for districts to establish differentiated pay plans for their schools. A review of district policies in 2013 indicated that district differentiated pay plans were not updated and/or monitored on a consistent basis. For this reason in 2013, the State Board of Education revised the initial guidelines around differentiated pay plans. The new differentiated pay guidelines focus on staffing of hard-to-fill subject areas

and the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in Tennessee schools. These guidelines include a stipulation that any performance compensation should be based on approved effectiveness measures from the teacher evaluation. The revised guidelines also prohibit districts from implementing across the board pay raises based solely on years of experience or educational attainment.<sup>86</sup> In 2014, House Bill 1270/Senate Bill 1291 passed, which allows pay supplements based on experience and degrees to be maintained for educators who qualified for these supplements prior to 2013.<sup>87</sup> Finally, over the past year, the Tennessee Department of Education supported district development of differentiated pay plans. These plans were submitted to the Tennessee Department of Education in 2014 and will be implemented in districts across the state in the 2014-15 school year.<sup>88</sup>

**Teacher Leader Models:** Research has found that creating opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles within their schools can improve teacher retention and motivation.<sup>89</sup> In 2010, the State Board of Education adopted the Teacher Leader Standards to expand leadership opportunities for Tennessee teachers. In 2013, the Tennessee Department of Education created a Tennessee Teacher Leader Council, consisting of six rural and urban districts, to develop teacher leader models that could be adapted for implementation in diverse districts around the state. The Teacher Leader Council included district leadership teams from Clarksville-Montgomery Schools, Dyersburg City Schools, Henry County Schools, Kingsport City Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and Sullivan County Schools.

## EMPOWERING TEACHERS THROUGH SHARED LEADERSHIP: SULLIVAN COUNTY'S TEACHER LEADER MODEL

In Sullivan County, district and school leaders worked with the Tennessee Department of Education to develop a teacher leader model that aligned with their district's unique needs. Superintendent Dr. Jubal Yennie, explained, "We developed our teacher leader model to create opportunities for teachers to be leaders and for them to be rewarded for it. We also wanted to invest in the concept of shared leadership at the building level."<sup>94</sup> Using the Tennessee Teacher Leader Standards as a guide, Sullivan County developed three unique roles that teacher leaders could take on in schools around the district:

- › **The Classroom Support Coach** plans and collaborates with teachers to ensure that core instruction is rigorous and effective. In this role, a teacher leader will observe other teachers on a regular basis and provide them with timely feedback that can inform improvements in their instruction.
- › **The Learning Support Coach** works together with teachers to analyze data from both summative and formative assessments. In a meeting with a Learning Support Coach, a teacher might bring a piece of student work to the table and receive advice on how to move that student forward.
- › **The Curriculum and Instruction Support Coach** works to increase student learning and achievement through a close analysis of instructional practices. These teacher leaders analyze teacher needs in their building through observations or surveys and provide needs based professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Each of these district leadership teams worked with the Tennessee Department of Education and national experts to create teacher leader models aligned with the Tennessee Teacher Leader Standards. These models provide opportunities for teachers to take on additional responsibilities in their districts or schools without leaving the classroom. These responsibilities could include instructional coaching, mentoring, or supporting curriculum development at the school or district level. Teacher leaders are compensated for taking on these additional responsibilities. In the coming year, these six districts will pilot their teacher leader models and the Tennessee Department of Education will work with additional districts to develop teacher leader models to be implemented in their schools.<sup>90</sup>

**Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI<sup>2</sup>):** In addition to changes in preparation, evaluation, and teacher leadership, RTI<sup>2</sup> was implemented in all elementary schools in 2014-15 to provide teachers with a structure for more effectively identifying students in need of intervention. The implementation of RTI<sup>2</sup> is the result of a policy change approved by the State Board of Education in June 2013 that makes RTI<sup>2</sup> the sole method in Tennessee by which students can be identified as having a Specific Learning Disability. While all elementary schools are implementing RTI<sup>2</sup> in 2014-15, middle and high schools have the option of waiting to fully implement RTI<sup>2</sup> until 2015-16.<sup>91</sup>

RTI<sup>2</sup> focuses on high-quality instruction and interventions that are tailored to individual student needs and where in-

structional 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.<sup>92</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the RTI<sup>2</sup> model:

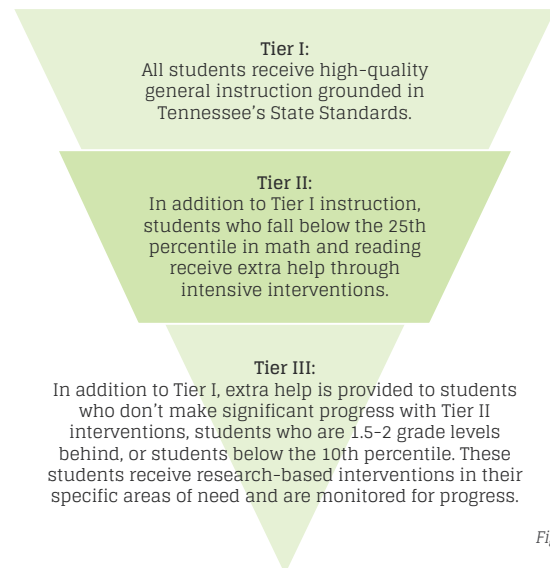


Figure 1<sup>93</sup>

District leaders and school leaders selected around 60 teachers to serve as teacher leaders during the 2014-15 school year. These teachers underwent a rigorous selection and training process that prepared them for their new leadership roles. The training focused on how to provide peers with actionable and constructive feedback, how to overcome obstacles in a teacher leader role, and how to implement a teacher leader model for the first time in a school.

Dr. Robin McClellan, former principal of Emmett Elementary School and current Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction in Sullivan County, witnessed the impact the teacher leader model is having in schools and classrooms throughout the district. She explains, "Teacher leaders are the hands and feet of the principal. They provide support to their peers through timely, specific feedback and focused professional learning. This allows principals to focus on other critical needs in the school, relying on a shared leadership model and empowering teachers to capitalize on their unique strengths."<sup>95</sup> Dr. McClellan has also seen the teacher leader model transform the culture of collaboration in her school. Teachers are spending more time in conversations with each other that are focused solely on instruction. She explained, "I've seen teachers seeking each other out to grow as instructional experts."<sup>96</sup>

Sullivan County plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher leader model through qualitative surveys and an analysis of teachers' scores on the TEAM evaluation. These pieces of data will help district and school leaders better understand the needs of both teachers and teacher leaders so that they can provide them with the support they need to continually improve in their instruction.

## PRIORITIES FOR 2015: ELEVATE THE TEACHING PROFESSION

**Elevate the teaching profession in Tennessee to ensure that high-quality candidates pursue a career in education and that Tennessee's current teachers receive the support they need to improve student learning.** Research indicates that teachers have a larger impact on student learning than any other in-school factor. For this reason, it is important to ensure that high-quality candidates pursue careers in education and have access to effective preparation programs that give them the skills they need to effectively improve student achievement. It is also important to elevate current teachers, providing them with the support, recognition, and voice they need to continually develop their instructional skills and improve student learning in Tennessee.

- 1. Teacher Preparation:** *Implement a more rigorous teacher preparation program approval process and improve the quality of teacher preparation programs to create a pipeline of teachers that effectively meet the needs of Tennessee students.* The first step in creating a more effective cohort of Tennessee teachers is to recruit high-quality candidates to the profession and improve the quality of Tennessee's teacher preparation programs. It is important for the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education to develop a more rigorous teacher preparation program approval process that focuses on outcomes such as teacher retention and teaching effectiveness, in addition to inputs such as selectivity of candidates and rigorous curricula. While the Educator Preparation Policy laid the foundation for improvements in teacher preparation, it is imperative to ensure that this policy is implemented effectively and yields significant change in programs on the ground. The Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education must support the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education to ensure this program approval process is implemented effectively statewide and yields positive outcomes in teacher preparation practices.
- 2. Support and Coaching:** *Ensure school leaders have the support they need to provide teachers with high-quality feedback and support as a result of Tennessee's teacher evaluation.* While the teacher evaluation created opportunities for teachers and principals to have meaningful conversations about instruction, it is important to ensure teachers are receiving the feedback and support they need to improve their instructional practices. School districts and CORE offices play a critical role in supporting school leaders with professional learning opportunities that allow them to more deeply



ly understand how to provide teachers with high-quality feedback and support. These professional learning opportunities should model best practices in instructional feedback and provide real-time coaching to school leaders on how to improve the quality of feedback they give teachers.

3. **Teacher Recognition:** *Ensure Tennessee commits to being the fastest-improving state in teacher pay and expands opportunities for high-performing teachers to be recognized for their exemplary instruction.* It is important to recognize and reward teachers for the work they do in classrooms every day to improve student learning. In comparison to other states, Tennessee currently ranks 40<sup>th</sup> in average teacher pay and 30<sup>th</sup> in percent change in teacher pay between the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years.<sup>97</sup> Tennessee made a commitment to being the fastest-improving state in the country in teacher pay and it is important for Tennessee leaders to follow through on that commitment in 2015. Local school districts, the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee's teacher organizations, and education partners such as SCORE play a critical role in continuing to recognize and reward highly effective teachers through initiatives such as teacher of the year programs, differentiated pay plans, and teacher leadership opportunities.
4. **Teacher Leader Models:** *Provide leadership opportunities to current teachers through the expanded implementation of teacher leader models throughout the state.* In the 2013-14 school year, several districts had the opportunity to develop teacher leader models for their schools. These models provide opportunities for highly effective teachers to serve as mentors, instructional coaches, and leaders in their

schools without leaving the classroom. As these models are implemented, they should be monitored for effectiveness and evaluated for continued improvement. It is important for school districts to work with the Tennessee Department of Education to expand teacher leader models throughout the state and to explore other innovative ways to provide teachers with leadership opportunities throughout their careers. Districts should also look to national models of teacher leadership, local business partners, higher education partners, and non-profits to support the development of teacher leader models in their districts. Finally, it is important to provide educators with opportunities to have an authentic voice in the policymaking process through experiences like SCORE's Tennessee Educator Fellowship, TeachPlus' Teaching Policy Fellowship, the Tennessee Department of Education's Teacher Advisory Council, and Hope Street's National Teacher Fellows Program.

5. **Literacy Instruction:** *Convene a task force to develop a strategic plan around statewide reading performance that will ensure all educators have the support they need to help all Tennessee students establish a strong foundation in reading.* While Tennessee students have shown significant growth in math over the past several years, data from Tennessee achievement tests indicate that students in grades 3-8 continue to struggle in reading.<sup>98</sup> Key leaders including the Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and educators should convene a taskforce that includes national experts to develop a strategic plan around literacy performance for Tennessee. This strategic plan should focus on developing instructional skills in literacy for both current teachers and incoming teachers.



From Memphis to Manchester, the stories of these schools demonstrate how impactful teachers can be when provided with high-quality coaching and support as well opportunities to collaborate with one another around instructional improvement.

**Going from Good to Great Using Weekly Coaching Cycles.** At Freedom Preparatory Academy (FPA), a public charter middle school serving nearly 300 students in grades 6-10 in Memphis, teachers receive individualized support through a weekly coaching cycle. After soliciting feedback from teachers at the end of the 2013-14 school year, school leadership at FPA recognized that teachers wanted more support and coaching. In response, the school created two instructional coach positions, one focused on supporting English language arts and social studies teachers and one focused on supporting STEM teachers. The individuals appointed to these positions are expert educators and their primary charge is to coach and support teachers on a weekly basis.

FPA's weekly coaching cycle begins with an instructional coach observing a teacher's classroom. Following the observation, the teacher and coach meet for 45 minutes to debrief. The first 15 minutes of the meeting are spent discussing "glows," or areas of strength, and "grows," or areas of opportunity. From this conversation, the teacher and coach identify one area of opportunity that the teacher will work on over the coming week and work together to identify strategies, resources, and tools to help the teacher in his or her area of need. The following week, the instructional coach observes the class again to see how the teacher is progressing on the area of need. The weekly coaching cycle continues throughout the year and provides teachers with opportunities to work on achievable, concrete areas of instructional practice, allowing them to continuously improve in their instruction throughout the school year.

## PRIORITIES IN ACTION: FOCUSING ON INSTRUCTION TO ELEVATE STUDENT LEARNING



**Leveraging Teacher Talent through TAP.** At Westwood Elementary, a PK-5 school serving over 530 students in Middle Tennessee, school leaders leverage teacher talent through the System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP). This structure provides opportunities for highly effective educators to serve as a full-time master teacher or remain in the classroom as a mentor teacher. Master teachers do not have assigned students. Instead, they spend their time modeling lessons for teachers, providing job-embedded coaching and support, and serving as an additional observer in the evaluation process. These expert educators are critical in supporting other staff members in advancing the school's goals and improving instruction. Westwood's commitment to teacher leadership is accelerating growth in student achievement by ensuring that all students have access to highly effective instruction.



# IMPROVING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN TENNESSEE



## OVERVIEW:

Research demonstrates that principals matter greatly to student achievement. In fact, research has shown that of all in-school factors, principals' impact on student achievement is second only to that of teachers, accounting for approximately 25 percent of a school's impact on student learning.<sup>99</sup> Principals are instrumental in efforts to improve student learning, as they are responsible for the effective staffing, management, and continued development of schools. Recent research finds that principals play a key role in retaining top performing teachers, creating productive school cultures, and fostering working conditions that encourage effective teachers to stay in classrooms.<sup>100</sup>

Over the past decade, principals' jobs have shifted away from that of a building manager to that of an instructional leader.<sup>101</sup> This shift has resulted in a growing need for additional support and professional learning for current principals as well as a redesigning of principal preparation programs to more effectively prepare beginning principals for their role as instructional leaders.<sup>102</sup>

Tennessee laid the foundation for a commitment to the improved development and support of school leaders across the state with the passage of the Learning Centered Leadership Policy in 2008.<sup>103</sup> The Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS), an integral component of the Learning Centered Leadership Policy, were revised in 2013 to reflect current research and best practices in instructional leadership.<sup>104</sup> These policies were a catalyst for shifts in policy related to principal preparation and evaluation that signify the state's continued commitment to school leadership. Even so, it is difficult to determine how effectively these policies are implemented or the impact they have in districts across the state. For this reason, it is imperative to continue work in the area of school leadership to ensure all schools have access to principals who can transform instruction and sustain improved student learning.

## UPDATE ON THE WORK:

In order to ensure all schools have access to highly effective school leaders, it is important that all components of the principal pipeline provide school leaders with the skills they need to support teachers and students in classrooms across Tennessee. This includes not only principal preparation programs, but also principal support practices and principal evaluation systems. The following sections will provide an overview of recent changes in policy, legislation, and programs related to school leaders in Tennessee.

**Principal Preparation:** The Learning Centered Leadership Policy created a framework for higher quality principal preparation programs in Tennessee. This policy required partnerships to be formed between preparation programs and local school districts, the implementation of research-based curriculum, the establishment of new and more rigorous admissions standards, and the provision of high-quality clinical experiences to all principal candidates.<sup>105</sup> This policy did not require any follow-up data, surveys of partners, or other forms of monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability and measure the quality of these partnerships. For this reason, while partnership agreements were written as a result of the Learning Centered Leadership Policy, it is unclear whether these partnerships have been successfully implemented across the state.

There are several examples throughout Tennessee of best practices in principal preparation and of successful partnerships formed between local school districts and preparation programs. Some of these programs include the Leadership Academy at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, the Memphis Leadership Fellows Program at the University of Memphis, the Ayers Leadership Fellows program at Lipscomb University, and the Public Education Foundation's Principal Leadership Academy in Chattanooga. All of these programs include intensive clinical experiences in partnering school districts and have developed curricula from evidence-based best practices in principal preparation.<sup>106</sup>

In October 2013, Governor Haslam announced the creation of a new principal preparation program, partnering school districts and Vanderbilt University to train approximately 30 school leaders every year. In an address to education stakeholders, Governor Haslam emphasized the importance of school leaders, stating, “Successful organizations have great leaders at the top, and one of the most important things we can do to transform our schools is to have each one led by a great principal.”<sup>107</sup> The creation of this program signifies an important investment in the state’s continued commitment to school leadership.

**Principal Evaluation:** In order to improve student access to high-quality school leaders, it is essential for current principals to receive actionable feedback that allows them to develop as instructional leaders throughout their career. The principal evaluation rubric was revised in 2014 to align with the TILS and to better reflect current research on best practices in school leadership. This revised evaluation will be implemented in the 2014–15 school year.<sup>108</sup>

To ensure the revised principal evaluation rubric is implemented with fidelity, the Tennessee Department of Education will provide district leaders with professional learning oppor-

tunities on the revised rubric. Similar to the teacher evaluation, two highly effective district and school leaders will be selected from each CORE region to serve as TEAM administrator evaluation coaches, providing other district and school leaders with hands-on support and professional learning opportunities during the 2014–15 school year.<sup>109</sup> The Tennessee Department of Education is also offering professional learning opportunities to school leaders to ensure they understand all components of the revised rubric and the process under which they will be evaluated.<sup>110</sup>

**TNLead Grants:** As noted earlier, it is also important to support the development of current principals through professional learning opportunities and opportunities for collaboration. In 2013, the Tennessee Department of Education awarded \$4 million in Race to the Top funds to innovative programs that aimed to develop and support school leaders around the state. The Tennessee Department of Education called these TNLead grants and awarded the grants to eight unique programs. These programs ranged from teacher support models to the creation of regional principal professional learning communities. These programs were implemented in the 2013–14 school year, providing diverse forms of support to groups of principals around the state.<sup>111</sup>

## COLLABORATING FOR EXCELLENCE: TEACHER PEER EXCELLENCE GROUPS

Transporting an effective teacher collaboration model all the way from China to Tennessee, the Tennessee-Shanghai Leadership Collaborative at Vanderbilt University empowers teachers to connect with colleagues and accelerate instructional development.

The program has helped 18 Tennessee principals from six districts implement Teacher Peer Excellence Groups (TPEG), an approach to teacher collaboration used in Shanghai’s high-performing city school system. Led by Vanderbilt professors Dr. Xiu Cravens and Dr. Patrick Schuermann, the initiative is one of eight promising recipients of the 2013 TNLead grants from the Tennessee Department of Education.

TPEG aims to transform instruction through collaborative lesson planning, peer observations of instruction, and instructionally focused peer feedback. “One of my novice teachers said she felt like she gained seven years of experience last year from TPEG,” says Robin Newell, a principal who implemented TPEG last year at Mitchell-Neilson Schools in Murfreesboro City Schools. “She learned so much from watching her peers teach and giving them feedback, and from the feedback her peers gave her after ob-

servations.”<sup>112</sup> Amidst the many changes teachers have experienced over the past few years, Mrs. Newell finds that TPEG provides seamless support for efforts like higher standards and Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) evaluations.

Each TPEG cycle can last anywhere from a day to two or three weeks, and includes four clear stages:

1. *Lesson planning: Teachers collaboratively plan a lesson, focusing on content standards and on a pedagogical practice from the TEAM rubric.*
2. *Observation: One TPEG team member teaches the collaboratively planned lesson, while other team members observe.*
3. *Feedback: After the observation, the teachers engage in a feedback session, where the teacher receives specific, constructive, and actionable feedback.*
4. *Lesson refinement: The team comes together to discuss how the lesson or teaching practice could be refined to improve student learning.*

The process adds up to a perfect way to take professional learning communities to the next level, providing teachers with the timely feedback they need to continually grow in their instruction, Ms. Newell says.<sup>113</sup>

## PRIORITIES FOR 2015: TRANSFORM INSTRUCTION THROUGH HIGH- QUALITY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP



**Transform instruction through high-quality school leadership that meets local needs.** While highly effective teaching yields improved learning for Tennessee students, school leaders provide teachers with the support they need to improve instruction and student learning in their classrooms. For this reason, it is critical to invest in all aspects of the principal pipeline to increase district access to high-quality school leaders.

1. **Principal Preparation:** *Promote principal preparation program approval processes that require the implementation of best practices in principal preparation.* The first step in creating effective principals is recruiting high-quality candidates to principal preparation programs and improving the quality of preparation programs to ensure they provide principals with the skills they need to be instructional leaders in their schools. To do so, the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education should work to develop and oversee a more rigorous principal preparation program approval process that focuses more heavily on rigorous selection criteria, a research-based curriculum, high-quality clinical experiences, and partnerships between preparation programs and local school districts. This program approval process should also focus on the outcomes of programs such as principal placement rates and principal effectiveness measures.
2. **Support for Current Principals:** *Provide professional development and ongoing support to current principals to ensure they have the skills necessary to serve as instructional leaders in their schools.* It is critical to provide current principals with the support they need



to be instructional leaders in their schools. To do so, the state should learn from existing district models of principal support and scale up best practices in other districts. CORE offices should convene regional professional learning communities, facilitating partnerships between districts with innovative support programs for principals with other districts looking to develop such programs.

3. **Principal Pipeline Data System:** *Create a data system that provides more comprehensive information about principal preparation programs, current school leader performance, and the nature of the principal labor market to better inform improvement practices in the principal pipeline.* Currently, there is little data to inform the state's understanding of the principal pipeline in Tennessee. In order to inform improvement practices both in principal preparation programs and to better understand the nature of the principal labor market, it is essential for a comprehensive principal pipeline data system to be created. The State Board of Education should pass a policy that requires principal preparation programs to report key metrics and indicators to the state on an annual basis. It is important for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to work with its part-

ners to compile these indicators and metrics to create a comprehensive data system on the principal pipeline.

4. **Principal Evaluation:** *Expand training and support for district leaders on the principal evaluation.* Just as teachers need high-quality feedback and support as a result of the teacher evaluation, principals also need high-quality feedback and support as a result of the principal evaluation. As the revised principal evaluation is implemented, CORE offices play a unique role in ensuring that district leaders have the capacity to implement the evaluation with fidelity and have the resources they need to support principals in their improvement efforts. For this reason, it is important for the CORE offices to expand training and support for district leaders on the principal evaluation and establish professional learning communities for district leaders on a regional level, allowing them to learn from best practices with the principal evaluation in neighboring districts. Additionally, the Tennessee Department of Education should suggest high-quality partners or professional learning providers that can assist districts in providing professional learning opportunities for principals and district leaders on principal evaluation practices.

In Tennessee we must do more to support, develop, train, and recruit highly effective school leaders. These schools and districts have acknowledged the critical role that school leaders play in improving student achievement and have dedicated time and energy to thinking about how school leaders can work to maximize student success.

**Developing a Pipeline and Training Ground for Prospective School Leaders.** In Kingsport City Schools, a PK-12 school district with 13 schools serving over 7,000 students in Upper East Tennessee, strong school, district, and teacher leadership is a core component of the district's success. Kingsport's Associate Principals program provides teachers and other system-wide personnel the opportunity to spend three-years working alongside a principal to learn more about the role of a school leader.

Each elementary and middle school in Kingsport has an associate principal. The position provides an opportunity for aspiring leaders to develop leadership skills through hands-on experience. Associate principals witness first-hand the various components of the principalship such as managing curriculum and instruction, leading professional learning, serving as the testing coordinator, and working with parents and the community. Aspiring leaders also receive mentoring from expert principals in the district. From the district's perspective, having associate principals allows Kingsport to "field test" prospective school leaders and assists the district in developing a leadership pipeline. Additionally, the program provides an opportunity for individuals interested in school leadership to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to support Kingsport's vision and mission for its schools. Several of the graduates of the associate principals program are current school leaders in Kingsport's 13 schools.

## PRIORITIES IN ACTION: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF STUDENT LEARNING



**Collaboration and Professional Learning Communities for Principals, Assistant Principals, and Aspiring Leaders.** In Williamson County Schools, a school district with 41 schools serving over 35,000 students in Middle Tennessee, providing opportunities for principals to share strategies and collaborate is a key component of the district's success. One strategy Williamson County implements to support school leaders is Principal Professional Learning Communities. Additionally, principals host their fellow administrators in school visits to identify best practices. Williamson County holds monthly, system-wide principal professional learning community meetings for elementary, middle, and high school principals. This approach enables school leaders to have meaningful opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and discuss strategies for implementing new programs, sharing innovations, and supporting each other in a role that is sometimes isolating. These Principal Professional Learning Communities provide school leaders with opportunities to work together and collaborate towards the goal of improving student learning.



A close-up photograph of a young man with dark, curly hair and black-rimmed glasses, looking down at an open book he is holding. The book has a dark, textured cover. The image is partially overlaid on the right side by a large, diagonal green graphic element. The text "SCORE CARD" is printed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the lower portion of the book's cover.

**SCORE CARD**

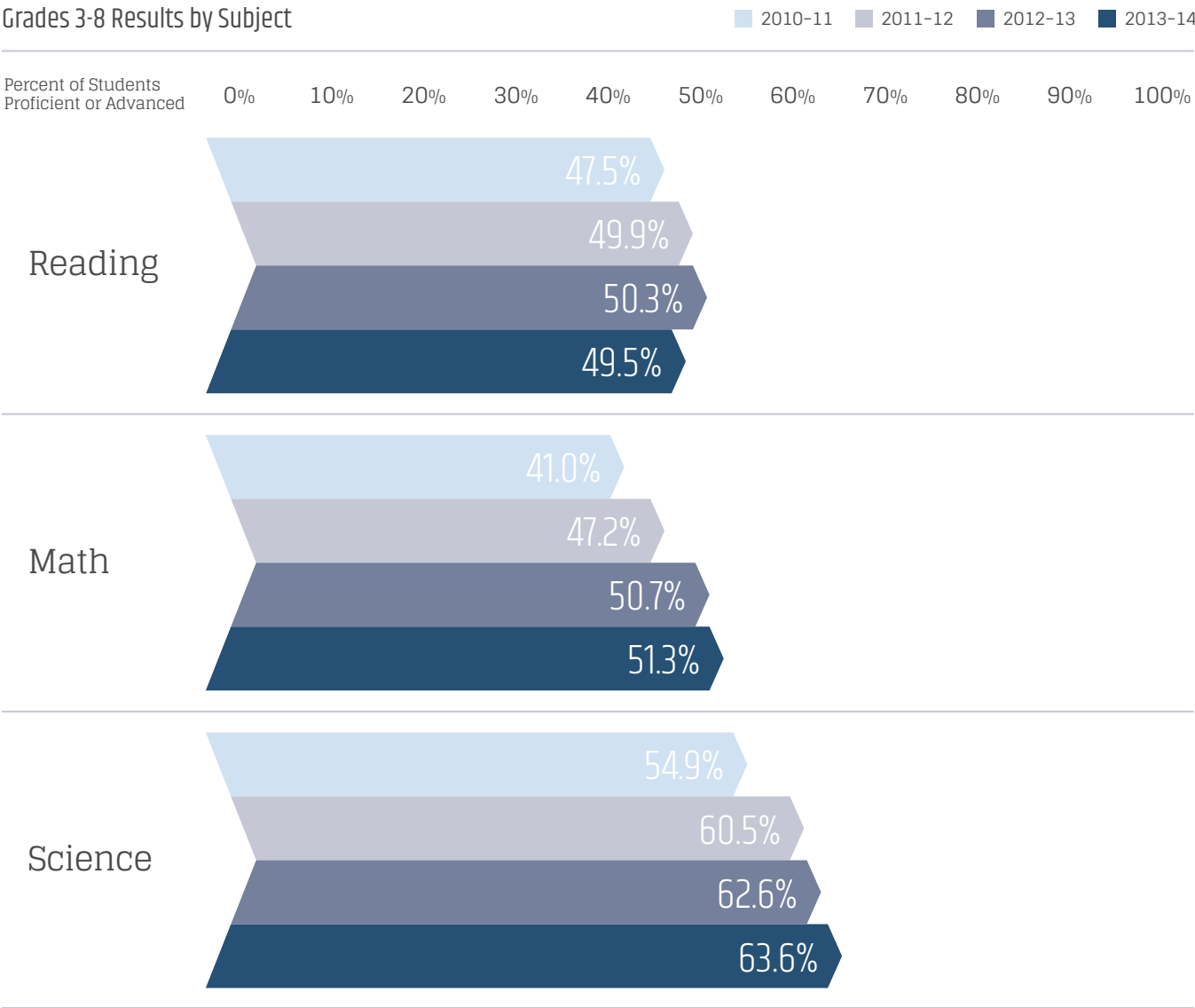
# 2013-14 STATE DATA

## STATE ASSESSMENTS

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) currently encompasses subject-specific assessments for grades 3-8, as well as high school end-of-course exams. Since 2010, districts across the state have seen significant increases in the number of students who are proficient or advanced in math and science from third through twelfth grade – statewide, there are approximately 100,000 more students who are proficient in math and 57,000 more in science.<sup>114</sup> The following graphs illustrate the continued growth on state exams in math, reading, and science.

### CONTINUED TCAP GROWTH

Grades 3-8 Results by Subject



# HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

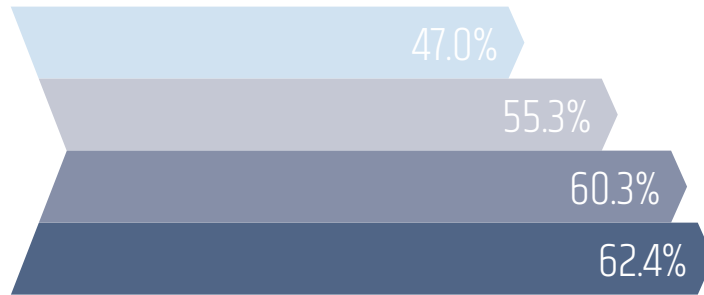
## End-of-Course Results by Subject

2010-11 2011-12 2012-13 2013-14

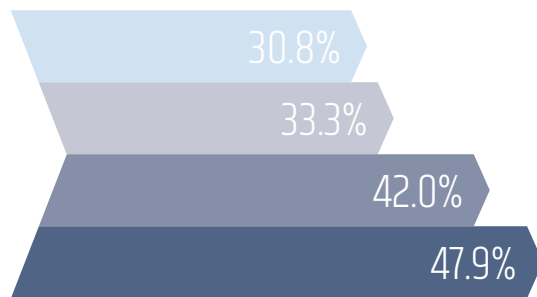
Percent of Students  
Proficient or Advanced

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Algebra I



Algebra II



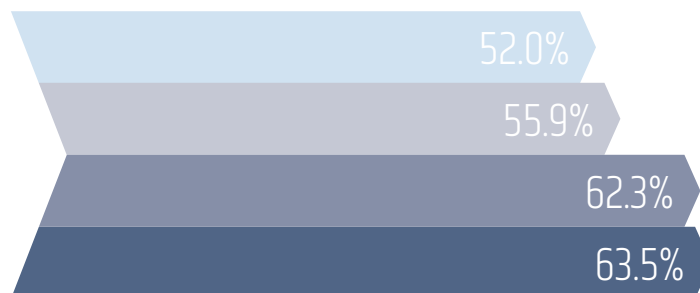
English I



English II



Biology

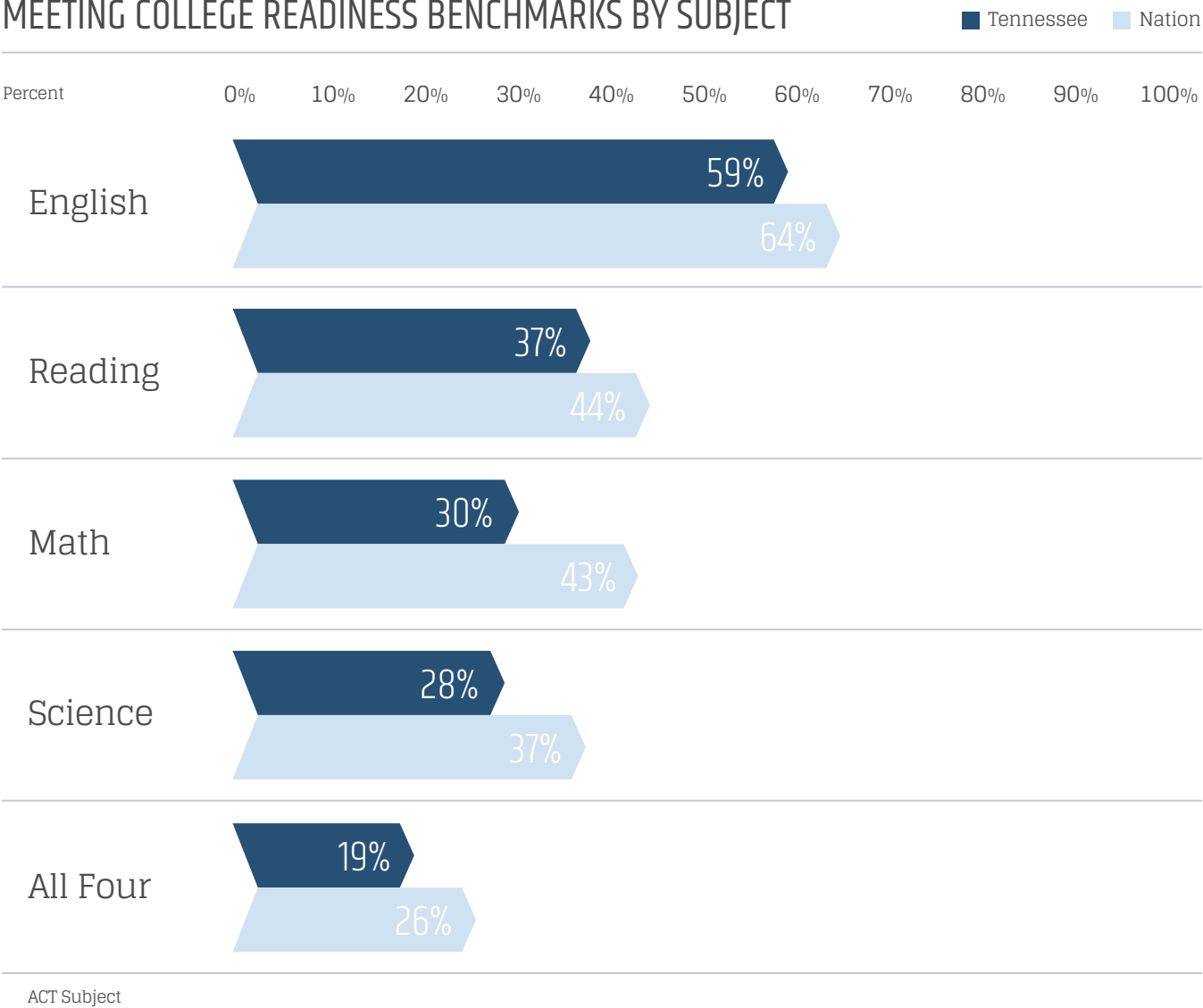




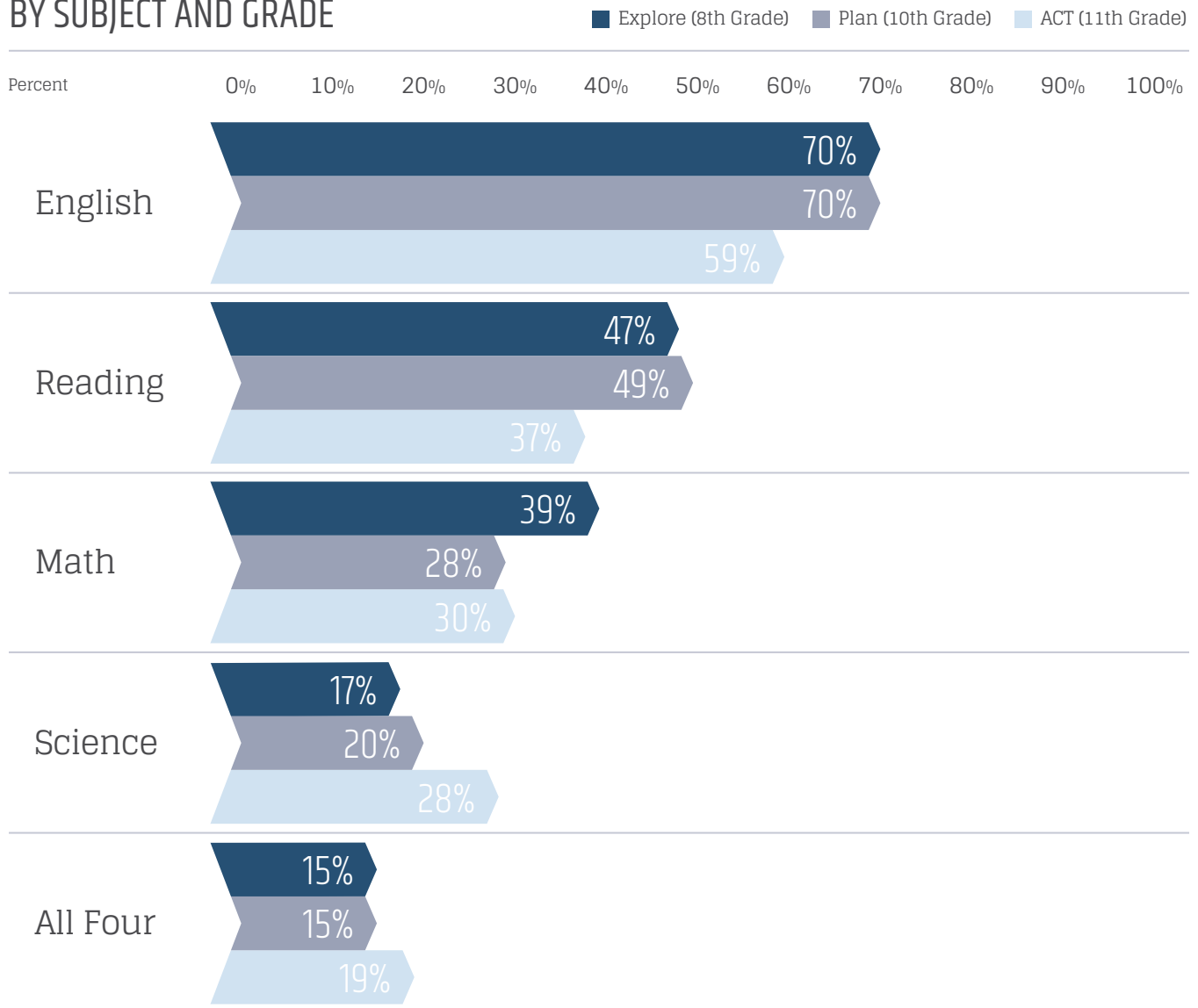
# COLLEGE READINESS EXAMS

Tennessee requires specific assessments to measure whether or not students are on track to graduate ready for college and career. The assessments include: ACT Explore in eighth grade, ACT Plan in tenth grade, and the ACT in eleventh grade. Students meeting ACT Benchmark scores have approximately a 50 percent chance of earning a B or higher and approximately a 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in their corresponding college course area.<sup>115</sup> Since 2010, Tennessee has seen progress in terms of the percent of students meeting the College Readiness Benchmarks, but continues to be below the majority of other states who use the ACT. In 2014, only 19 percent of eleventh-graders, 15 percent of tenth-graders, and 15 percent of eighth-graders met all four benchmarks on their respective ACT tests.<sup>116</sup> Tennessee's ACT composite score ranks 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 states in which more than 75 percent of high school students take the ACT.<sup>117</sup>

## PERCENT OF 2014 ACT-TESTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING COLLEGE READINESS BENCHMARKS BY SUBJECT

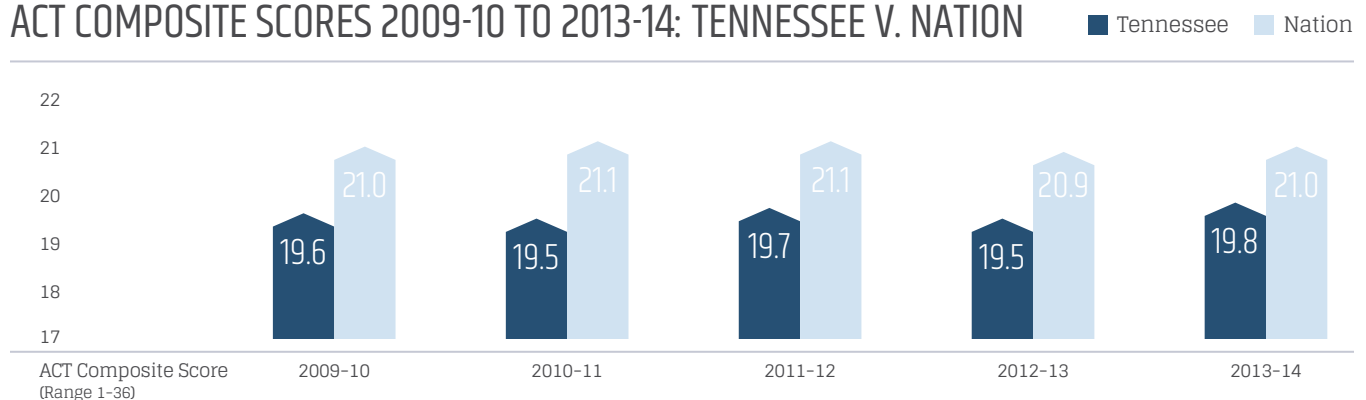


## TENNESSEE 2014 COLLEGE READINESS BY SUBJECT AND GRADE



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 the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school year were considered "noteworthy" by ACT officials.<sup>118</sup> 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. These adjustments changed the college readiness benchmarks in reading and science. 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.

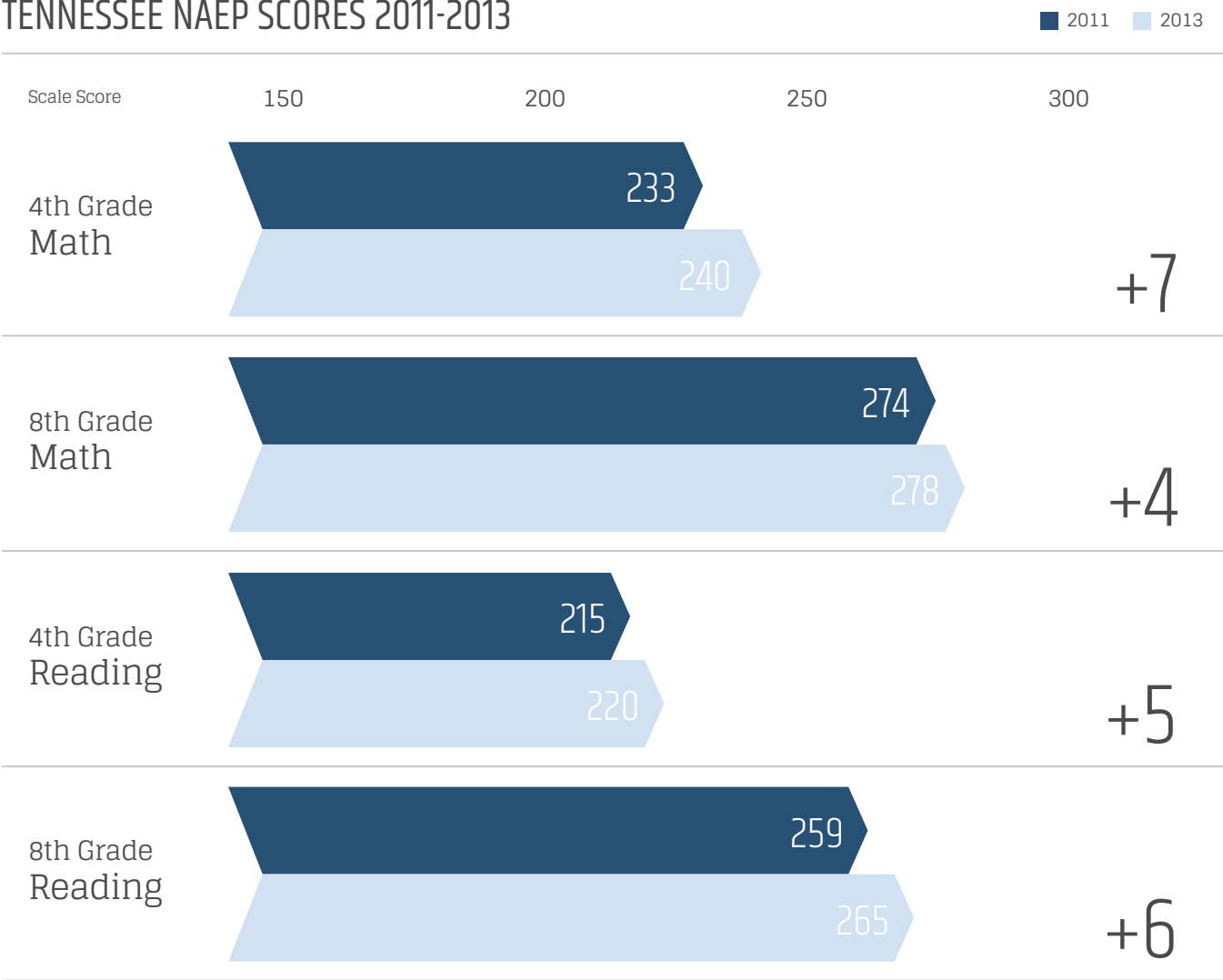
## ACT COMPOSITE SCORES 2009-10 TO 2013-14: TENNESSEE V. NATION



# NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) is currently the only consistent measure to compare student achievement in fourth and eighth grade 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 that Tennessee made between 2011 and 2013 in terms of both scores and the percent of students proficient or advanced by subject and grade.

## TENNESSEE NAEP SCORES 2011-2013



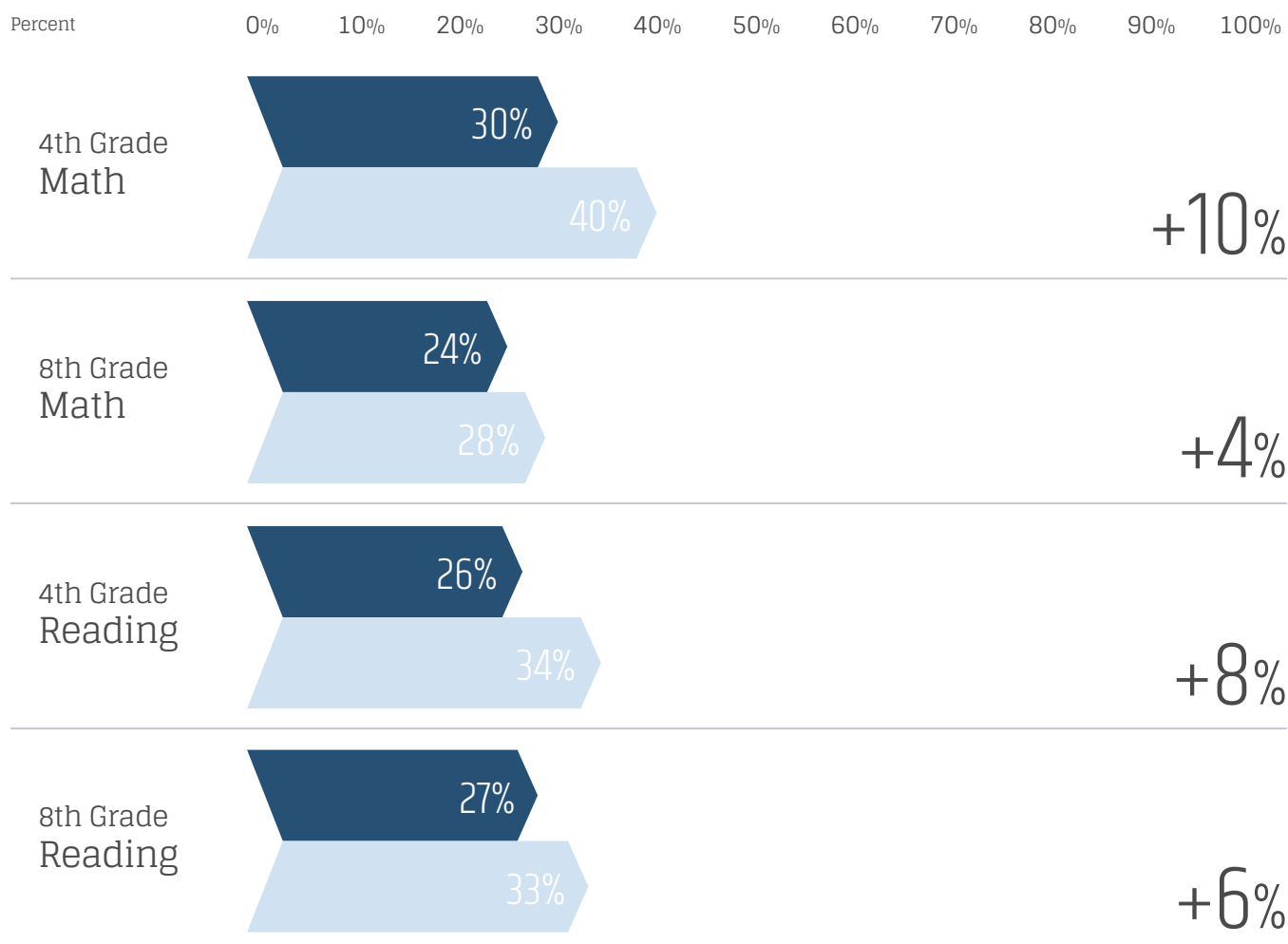
## TENNESSEE'S NATIONAL RANKING

ON THE NAEP MATH AND READING EXAMS IMPROVED BETWEEN 2011 AND 2013.

	Math		Reading	
	4th Grade	8th Grade	4th Grade	8th Grade
2011 Ranking	46 <sup>TH</sup>	45 <sup>TH</sup>	41 <sup>ST</sup>	41 <sup>ST</sup>
2013 Ranking	37 <sup>TH</sup>	43 <sup>RD</sup>	31 <sup>ST</sup>	34 <sup>TH</sup>

## TENNESSEE NAEP PROFICIENCY RATES 2011-2013

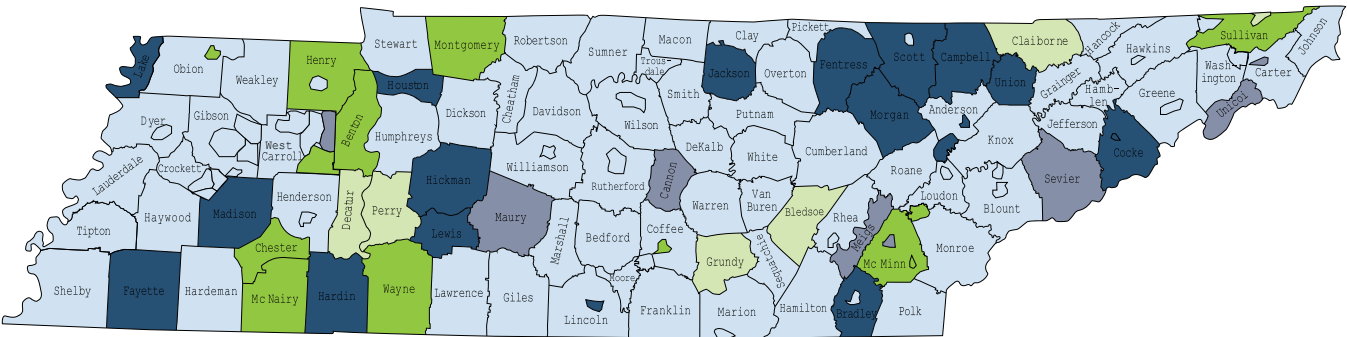
■ 2011 ■ 2013



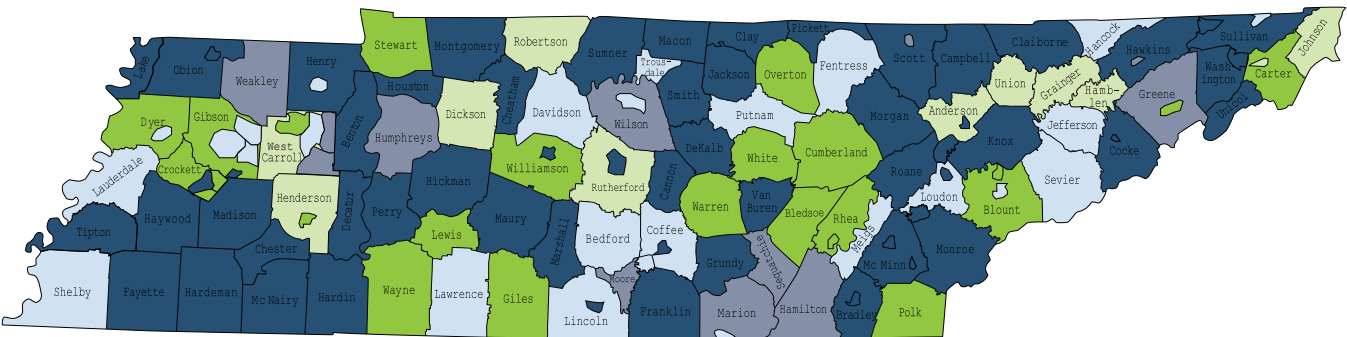
# 2013-14 DISTRICT DATA

The state data presented in the previous section clearly show that Tennessee students have been improving on both state and national assessments. However, it is also important to look at district-specific data to better understand how gains in student achievement may differ across the state. The maps below illustrate the difference between student achievement growth in math and reading/language arts. Seventy-one percent of districts had a TVAAS Numeracy score of four or five, meaning that their students made more progress in math than what had been predicted. On the other hand, 54 percent of districts had a TVAAS Literacy score of one or two, meaning that their students were making less progress in reading/language arts.

## Gains in Math Achievement



## Gains in Literacy Achievement



- Most Effective
- Above Average Effectiveness
- Average Effectiveness
- Approaching Average Effectiveness
- Least Effective

## SCORE CARD INDICATORS

The following pages present in-depth student achievement data for each district in Tennessee. Descriptions of each metric measured in the report are provided, and more information about individual measures may be found in the glossary. The district data for each of the following indicators were obtained from the Tennessee Department of Education and apply to the 2013-14 school year.

### DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

**Number of Schools:** The number of schools operating in each district for the 2013-14 school year

**Enrollment:** The total count of students enrolled in each individual school district as of October 1, 2013

**Percent White:** The percent of enrolled students identified as white

**Percent Black:** The percent of enrolled students identified as black or African-American

**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

### 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 2013-14 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 2013-14 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
- › **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

### HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

**EOC English II:** The percent of 9-12 grade students within the district who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2013-14 English II EOC

**EOC Algebra I:** The percent of 9-12 grade students within the district who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2013-14 Algebra I EOC

**EOC Biology I:** The percent of 9-12 grade students within the district who scored proficient or advanced on the state's 2013-14 Biology I EOC

**ACT Composite:** The average ACT composite score for the 2014 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	District Characteristics						
	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
Achievement School District	16	4,110	2%	97%	93%	\$11,611	1%
Alamo City	1	654	73%	10%	66%	\$8,765	11%
Alcoa City	3	1,869	68%	21%	50%	\$10,658	52%
Alvin C. York Institute	1	620	98%	0%	62%	*	*
Anderson County	17	6,685	95%	3%	59%	\$9,804	45%
Athens City	5	1,717	72%	17%	67%	\$10,116	34%
Bedford County	14	8,360	68%	11%	66%	\$7,980	19%
Bells City	1	443	59%	19%	69%	\$8,434	13%
Benton County	8	2,290	93%	4%	63%	\$9,626	30%
Bledsoe County	5	1,975	91%	1%	81%	\$9,486	15%
Blount County	20	11,214	92%	3%	53%	\$8,851	39%
Bradford SSD	2	543	92%	7%	64%	\$10,316	19%
Bradley County	18	10,455	91%	4%	55%	\$8,467	29%
Bristol City	8	4,082	90%	5%	53%	\$10,325	52%
Campbell County	13	5,917	98%	1%	75%	\$8,073	21%
Cannon County	7	2,103	95%	2%	62%	\$8,534	19%
Carter County	15	5,566	96%	2%	71%	\$9,015	24%
Cheatham County	13	6,625	94%	2%	53%	\$7,993	26%
Chester County	6	2,802	82%	14%	57%	\$7,854	14%
Claiborne County	13	4,625	97%	2%	71%	\$9,175	25%
Clay County	4	1,073	96%	2%	69%	\$8,870	20%
Cleveland City	8	5,440	66%	15%	64%	\$9,356	35%
Clinton City	3	951	89%	6%	61%	\$9,917	39%
Cocke County	12	4,788	93%	3%	79%	\$9,115	24%
Coffee County	9	4,588	91%	3%	59%	\$9,161	35%
Crockett County	5	1,972	71%	14%	64%	\$8,332	15%
Cumberland County	12	7,518	93%	1%	66%	\$8,271	31%
Davidson County	156	82,806	31%	45%	73%	\$11,453	58%
Dayton City	1	864	80%	7%	68%	\$8,222	19%
Decatur County	4	1,661	92%	4%	54%	\$8,860	25%
DeKalb County	6	2,989	88%	2%	65%	\$8,690	19%
Dickson County	15	8,382	87%	8%	53%	\$8,540	32%
Dyer County	8	3,896	89%	8%	62%	\$8,784	32%
Dyersburg City	4	2,768	50%	43%	73%	\$10,463	34%
Elizabethton City	5	2,521	93%	4%	52%	\$9,665	34%

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
22%	17%	1	1	2	*	*	*	*	*	*
71%	58%	1	5	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
56%	56%	5	5	3	78%	77%	71%	21.3	98%	29%
*	*	4	5	3	62%	73%	57%	*	81%	*
52%	48%	5	5	2	58%	68%	67%	19.3	94%	16%
61%	53%	1	4	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
49%	45%	5	5	5	60%	59%	57%	18.4	91%	10%
63%	52%	5	5	3	*	*	*	*	*	*
49%	45%	1	3	1	66%	55%	72%	19	95%	12%
40%	41%	3	2	3	64%	56%	77%	18.5	92%	6%
53%	51%	5	5	3	70%	68%	66%	19.7	89%	16%
77%	60%	5	5	5	*	95%	*	19	100%	6%
47%	52%	1	1	1	66%	64%	67%	18.9	93%	13%
56%	54%	4	2	5	76%	71%	71%	20.9	89%	22%
40%	39%	1	1	1	52%	54%	47%	17.5	88%	7%
46%	41%	1	4	1	58%	35%	59%	17.9	95%	10%
39%	43%	1	5	3	59%	65%	72%	18.2	89%	6%
52%	48%	1	5	1	71%	53%	71%	19.4	91%	17%
62%	51%	1	3	1	66%	69%	63%	19.2	88%	15%
51%	46%	1	2	1	55%	48%	56%	18.2	95%	8%
35%	32%	1	5	1	47%	79%	54%	18.5	97%	7%
49%	46%	1	5	1	67%	57%	57%	19.6	84%	14%
64%	57%	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
53%	45%	1	1	1	54%	57%	55%	18	94%	12%
51%	48%	3	5	5	61%	47%	70%	19.2	89%	18%
46%	48%	3	5	3	58%	68%	68%	18.6	96%	7%
55%	54%	5	5	3	71%	74%	73%	19.5	93%	15%
45%	41%	5	5	5	55%	48%	49%	18.4	79%	12%
57%	55%	5	5	3	*	*	*	*	*	*
52%	46%	1	2	1	52%	69%	59%	18.5	94%	9%
45%	48%	5	5	1	56%	64%	77%	17.8	95%	5%
59%	58%	2	5	2	72%	69%	72%	19.2	91%	12%
58%	55%	1	5	3	66%	71%	79%	19.9	95%	15%
52%	45%	5	5	5	62%	74%	52%	21.1	83%	25%
55%	56%	3	4	2	66%	70%	*	20.9	97%	22%

DISTRICT	District Characteristics						
	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
Etowah City	1	362	91%	6%	77%	\$10,146	22%
Fayette County	10	3,689	37%	58%	78%	\$9,117	31%
Fayetteville City	3	1,475	62%	31%	61%	\$8,872	28%
Fentress County	6	2,353	98%	1%	77%	\$9,033	19%
Franklin County	11	5,800	88%	7%	59%	\$9,030	31%
Franklin SSD	8	3,805	57%	14%	39%	\$13,552	67%
Gibson Co SSD	9	4,011	91%	8%	44%	\$7,152	27%
Giles County	8	4,030	80%	17%	62%	\$8,620	32%
Grainger County	9	3,651	94%	1%	66%	\$7,952	15%
Greene County	16	7,290	95%	2%	73%	\$8,100	25%
Greeneville City	7	2,823	79%	10%	48%	\$10,861	43%
Grundy County	8	2,275	99%	0%	82%	\$9,280	14%
Hamblen County	18	10,214	71%	7%	65%	\$8,279	33%
Hamilton County	78	43,531	58%	31%	59%	\$9,752	51%
Hancock County	2	965	99%	1%	81%	\$9,684	11%
Hardeman County	9	4,049	43%	54%	82%	\$9,577	23%
Hardin County	7	3,681	91%	6%	67%	\$9,605	37%
Hawkins County	18	7,266	95%	2%	67%	\$9,397	27%
Haywood County	5	3,350	30%	63%	76%	\$9,592	21%
Henderson County	9	3,970	89%	8%	62%	\$8,201	25%
Henry County	6	3,134	91%	6%	62%	\$9,335	32%
Hickman County	8	3,619	94%	3%	64%	\$8,928	18%
Hollow Rock Bruceton	2	659	87%	10%	76%	\$8,190	20%
Houston County	5	1,393	90%	6%	57%	\$9,096	17%
Humboldt City	4	1,180	19%	77%	93%	\$11,205	23%
Humphreys County	7	3,049	94%	4%	65%	\$9,235	26%
Huntingdon SSD	3	1,238	79%	19%	53%	\$8,080	24%
Jackson County	4	1,588	98%	1%	72%	\$9,158	19%
Jackson-Madison County	27	13,097	32%	61%	77%	\$9,747	44%
Jefferson County	12	7,486	89%	3%	62%	\$8,724	28%
Johnson City	11	7,849	74%	14%	51%	\$9,392	52%
Johnson County	7	2,258	96%	1%	70%	\$10,333	22%
Kingsport City	13	7,258	84%	10%	54%	\$10,353	54%
Knox County	89	59,232	74%	16%	50%	\$9,342	52%
Lake County	3	943	66%	32%	78%	\$11,149	18%

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
39%	37%	1	3	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
29%	34%	1	1	1	47%	29%	48%	16.7	81%	2%
43%	47%	3	1	1	65%	49%	63%	*	98%	*
38%	45%	4	1	5	66%	62%	55%	17.7	94%	7%
44%	43%	1	5	1	58%	52%	55%	18.6	89%	11%
72%	69%	5	5	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
65%	61%	5	5	3	74%	83%	78%	19.7	95%	18%
46%	47%	2	5	3	59%	45%	55%	18	87%	10%
42%	39%	3	5	2	53%	44%	58%	18.4	88%	11%
46%	44%	5	5	4	64%	67%	68%	19.4	94%	15%
66%	60%	5	5	3	75%	89%	85%	21.6	99%	32%
34%	35%	1	2	1	51%	59%	51%	17.7	90%	5%
53%	49%	5	5	2	64%	73%	68%	19.1	91%	17%
54%	47%	1	5	4	58%	51%	61%	19	83%	14%
33%	32%	3	5	5	53%	51%	47%	16.7	90%	0%
47%	40%	4	5	1	43%	60%	49%	17.1	86%	4%
41%	45%	1	1	1	62%	56%	64%	18.9	91%	9%
51%	46%	1	5	1	55%	59%	69%	18.8	92%	15%
46%	35%	5	5	1	45%	39%	44%	16.9	85%	8%
68%	55%	3	5	2	69%	89%	77%	19.4	96%	13%
63%	55%	1	3	1	71%	77%	81%	19.3	92%	18%
50%	45%	1	1	1	48%	45%	48%	18.1	93%	11%
47%	46%	3	4	4	51%	46%	53%	18.3	93%	10%
46%	42%	1	1	1	70%	69%	73%	19.1	96%	7%
46%	31%	4	5	1	44%	77%	40%	17.6	69%	9%
53%	50%	3	5	4	83%	63%	78%	18.7	85%	11%
67%	57%	5	5	5	62%	57%	73%	19.8	94%	10%
41%	42%	1	1	1	55%	48%	66%	18.8	87%	13%
36%	37%	1	1	1	50%	58%	54%	17.8	95%	8%
45%	42%	5	5	5	67%	75%	71%	19.9	90%	16%
70%	65%	5	5	1	77%	83%	78%	22.1	90%	33%
54%	48%	5	5	2	49%	62%	66%	19.8	99%	17%
69%	59%	5	5	1	72%	80%	83%	22	90%	32%
54%	54%	5	5	1	70%	61%	70%	20.4	89%	23%
25%	31%	1	1	1	49%	35%	41%	16.1	89%	6%

DISTRICT	District Characteristics						
	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
Lauderdale County	7	4,618	53%	43%	79%	\$8,926	16%
Lawrence County	13	6,909	94%	3%	59%	\$8,221	22%
Lebanon SSD	6	3,772	67%	18%	62%	\$8,439	46%
Lenoir City	3	2,372	74%	2%	62%	\$9,096	45%
Lewis County	4	1,915	92%	4%	63%	\$8,184	18%
Lexington City	2	963	68%	25%	59%	\$10,505	27%
Lincoln County	8	4,066	91%	4%	53%	\$8,466	24%
Loudon County	9	4,940	85%	3%	55%	\$8,943	45%
Macon County	8	3,788	91%	1%	65%	\$8,298	19%
Manchester City	3	1,348	77%	6%	63%	\$12,356	39%
Marion County	10	4,330	93%	5%	73%	\$8,687	28%
Marshall County	9	5,365	83%	9%	58%	\$8,534	28%
Maryville City	7	5,135	89%	5%	37%	\$9,798	54%
Maury County	20	12,051	71%	19%	57%	\$8,554	36%
McKenzie SSD	3	1,411	80%	15%	59%	\$7,492	21%
McMinn County	9	5,929	90%	5%	63%	\$8,294	27%
McNairy County	8	4,395	90%	8%	65%	\$8,593	20%
Meigs County	4	1,809	97%	1%	65%	\$8,712	18%
Milan SSD	3	2,117	70%	25%	64%	\$8,854	27%
Monroe County	13	5,535	92%	3%	68%	\$8,969	25%
Montgomery County	38	31,297	56%	28%	48%	\$8,756	32%
Moore County	2	974	95%	3%	56%	\$9,795	36%
Morgan County	8	3,304	98%	1%	65%	\$8,472	14%
Murfreesboro City	11	7,163	54%	28%	55%	\$10,169	44%
Newport City	1	784	87%	7%	59%	\$8,965	28%
Oak Ridge City	7	4,520	71%	16%	53%	\$11,877	54%
Obion County	7	3,688	90%	5%	61%	\$8,802	29%
Oneida SSD	3	1,293	98%	1%	66%	\$8,216	19%
Overton County	9	3,386	97%	1%	64%	\$8,230	17%
Paris SSD	3	1,768	73%	24%	64%	\$8,679	35%
Perry County	4	1,153	93%	4%	71%	\$9,666	20%
Pickett County	2	784	97%	1%	62%	\$8,737	18%
Polk County	6	2,629	97%	1%	65%	\$8,555	21%
Putnam County	20	11,142	83%	4%	58%	\$8,559	34%
Rhea County	7	4,464	90%	2%	70%	\$8,809	24%

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
48%	42%	5	5	5	57%	82%	51%	17.6	97%	7%
66%	60%	5	5	5	65%	80%	72%	18.8	95%	10%
55%	51%	5	5	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
48%	38%	3	5	1	73%	72%	66%	20	91%	13%
46%	50%	1	1	3	55%	49%	52%	18.2	87%	7%
65%	50%	5	5	3	*	*	*	*	*	*
54%	57%	5	5	5	68%	64%	65%	19.7	95%	15%
58%	57%	5	5	5	64%	67%	72%	17.5	87%	11%
45%	43%	1	5	1	58%	72%	63%	19	86%	12%
46%	53%	1	3	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
50%	48%	5	5	4	70%	68%	76%	18.9	84%	10%
56%	47%	4	5	1	60%	74%	68%	19	90%	13%
72%	71%	5	5	5	83%	72%	86%	23.2	97%	42%
39%	46%	3	4	1	62%	65%	63%	18.9	87%	12%
59%	57%	4	5	3	72%	74%	85%	20.3	97%	22%
52%	48%	1	3	1	64%	76%	70%	18.5	96%	11%
48%	48%	1	3	1	65%	68%	56%	19.1	94%	10%
55%	52%	5	4	5	71%	76%	72%	18.5	100%	6%
63%	49%	5	5	5	71%	63%	70%	20.2	97%	20%
44%	41%	1	5	1	57%	66%	57%	18.3	95%	10%
51%	54%	1	3	1	68%	64%	70%	19.6	93%	17%
61%	51%	5	5	4	60%	43%	83%	18	87%	4%
31%	40%	1	1	1	49%	40%	52%	17.5	98%	6%
64%	54%	1	5	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
57%	58%	2	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
57%	59%	1	1	1	82%	61%	82%	23.3	90%	41%
55%	52%	5	5	1	71%	70%	69%	19	88%	13%
43%	50%	5	5	4	67%	73%	67%	19.4	99%	15%
57%	54%	2	5	3	60%	59%	68%	18.3	91%	8%
61%	54%	5	5	5	*	*	*	*	*	*
57%	48%	1	2	1	51%	50%	53%	17.9	92%	5%
41%	44%	3	5	1	58%	65%	*	19.6	94%	9%
46%	46%	5	5	3	59%	54%	70%	18.1	88%	6%
54%	52%	5	5	5	66%	66%	80%	19.8	93%	19%
56%	48%	3	5	3	65%	68%	63%	18.4	85%	12%

DISTRICT	District Characteristics						
	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	ENROLLMENT	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT ED	PER PUPIL SPENDING	PERCENT LOCAL FUNDING
Richard City	1	306	91%	7%	62%	\$8,905	22%
Roane County	17	7,090	92%	5%	58%	\$9,370	38%
Robertson County	20	11,492	77%	11%	51%	\$8,758	29%
Rogersville City	1	678	91%	4%	49%	\$9,558	33%
Rutherford County	47	41,497	67%	18%	42%	\$8,366	38%
Scott County	7	3,085	98%	0%	84%	\$8,315	14%
Sequatchie County	3	2,343	93%	1%	69%	\$7,635	22%
Sevier County	28	14,574	88%	2%	55%	\$9,546	60%
Shelby County	277	149,928	20%	68%	69%	\$10,333	40%
Smith County	9	3,210	92%	4%	57%	\$8,316	22%
South Carroll SSD	1	400	88%	8%	62%	\$8,596	23%
Stewart County	5	2,158	94%	3%	55%	\$8,420	21%
Sullivan County	23	10,654	96%	1%	56%	\$9,130	45%
Sumner County	46	28,712	81%	11%	41%	\$8,181	35%
Sweetwater City	4	1,625	84%	7%	73%	\$8,178	23%
Tenn Sch for Deaf	3	159	62%	29%	74%	*	*
Tenn School for Blind	1	145	69%	21%	54%	*	*
Tipton County	14	11,593	72%	25%	58%	\$8,369	20%
Trenton SSD	3	1,437	66%	28%	63%	\$8,742	27%
Trousdale County	3	1,262	82%	14%	57%	\$8,396	18%
Tullahoma City	7	3,514	80%	12%	53%	\$9,955	48%
Unicoi County	7	2,569	89%	1%	57%	\$8,876	22%
Union City	3	1,509	47%	42%	66%	\$9,077	34%
Union County	10	5,736	88%	8%	67%	\$7,923	11%
Van Buren County	2	770	99%	0%	63%	\$9,802	20%
Warren County	11	6,594	90%	6%	68%	\$8,765	24%
Washington County	16	8,991	94%	2%	47%	\$8,398	43%
Wayne County	8	2,468	97%	1%	64%	\$9,010	15%
Weakley County	11	4,536	87%	10%	63%	\$8,126	22%
West Carroll SSD	3	998	87%	11%	70%	\$8,465	23%
West Tn Sch for Deaf	1	51	49%	41%	82%	*	*
White County	9	4,093	94%	4%	67%	\$7,928	18%
Williamson County	41	34,341	83%	5%	12%	\$8,587	54%
Wilson County	20	16,576	85%	8%	30%	\$7,716	41%
Tennessee	1823	993,841	66%	24%	59%	\$9,346	39%

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%	53%	3	5	5	63%	86%	*	18.3	92%	4%
52%	50%	3	5	1	68%	62%	68%	18.8	93%	13%
53%	48%	4	5	2	63%	73%	68%	18.9	95%	13%
62%	66%	5	5	4	*	*	*	*	*	*
63%	61%	5	5	2	74%	68%	71%	20.1	93%	19%
41%	46%	1	1	1	53%	65%	55%	17.5	85%	7%
43%	38%	2	5	4	57%	64%	52%	20.7	86%	12%
45%	48%	1	4	5	64%	66%	64%	20.2	86%	20%
42%	41%	5	5	5	52%	54%	48%	17.7	75%	11%
55%	53%	1	5	1	64%	67%	65%	19.6	97%	15%
45%	54%	3	3	4	70%	82%	*	19.4	97%	10%
68%	55%	5	5	3	72%	80%	64%	19.5	96%	16%
51%	53%	1	3	1	59%	64%	63%	20.4	93%	21%
57%	58%	1	5	1	70%	66%	67%	20.2	90%	18%
52%	46%	1	3	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
0%	0%	*	*	*	15%	*	*	*	78%	*
2%	7%	*	*	*	26%	15%	*	*	11%	*
55%	46%	5	5	1	71%	82%	67%	20	98%	16%
58%	49%	5	5	5	54%	91%	71%	18.9	84%	11%
72%	57%	5	5	5	76%	90%	78%	19.2	97%	13%
52%	47%	5	5	5	73%	62%	63%	20.4	91%	21%
48%	47%	3	4	1	55%	48%	53%	18.2	94%	10%
42%	45%	3	3	1	72%	79%	77%	20.6	89%	26%
25%	40%	1	1	2	58%	67%	63%	18.4	87%	12%
36%	37%	1	5	1	69%	66%	69%	18.1	92%	6%
42%	47%	1	5	3	55%	51%	68%	18.5	89%	12%
59%	58%	1	5	1	67%	67%	74%	19.8	91%	15%
47%	48%	1	3	3	66%	61%	60%	18.2	96%	11%
61%	59%	5	5	4	78%	71%	77%	20.3	93%	20%
48%	56%	3	5	2	64%	59%	72%	18.8	91%	9%
4%	7%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
54%	50%	5	5	3	72%	76%	78%	18.6	93%	5%
81%	84%	5	5	3	89%	84%	88%	23.5	94%	41%
60%	61%	5	5	4	75%	72%	77%	19.7	96%	16%
51%	50%	*	*	*	63%	62%	64%	19.3	87%	16%



# 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 one to 36, the test is intended to be an indicator of college readiness. The subjects align with common college introductory courses. All 11<sup>th</sup>-graders in Tennessee are required to take the exam.<sup>119</sup>

**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.<sup>120</sup>

**Advanced Placement (AP):** Advanced Placement courses are offered by the College Board and 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.<sup>121</sup>

**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.<sup>122</sup>

**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.<sup>123</sup>

**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, teacher evaluation scores, 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.<sup>124</sup>

**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.<sup>125</sup>

**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.<sup>126</sup>

**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.<sup>127</sup>

**End-of-Course 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.<sup>128</sup>

**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.<sup>129</sup>

**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.<sup>130</sup>

**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 (RTI<sup>2</sup>):** RTI<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup>

**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.

**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.<sup>132</sup>

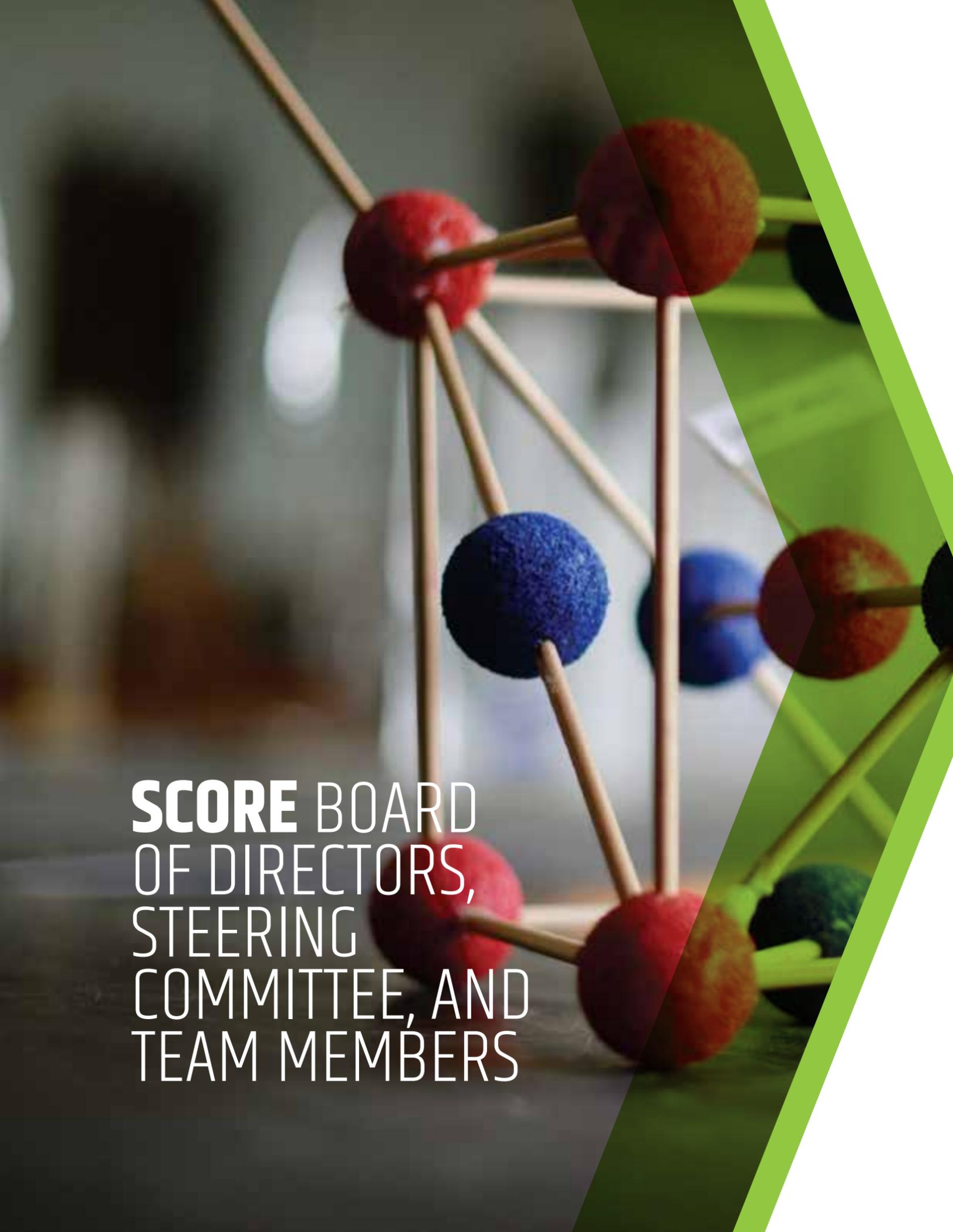
**Tennessee Diploma Project:** As a part of the American Diploma Project, this 2009 initiative increased the rigor of Tennessee's academic standards and graduation requirements with the aim of better aligning them with the demands of college and the workforce.

**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.<sup>133</sup>







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Director of Outreach

**Jennie Verner**

Director of Advocacy

**Cicely Woodard**

Educator Fellows Coordinator

**Annette Holmes**

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**Amber McCullough**

Operations Coordinator

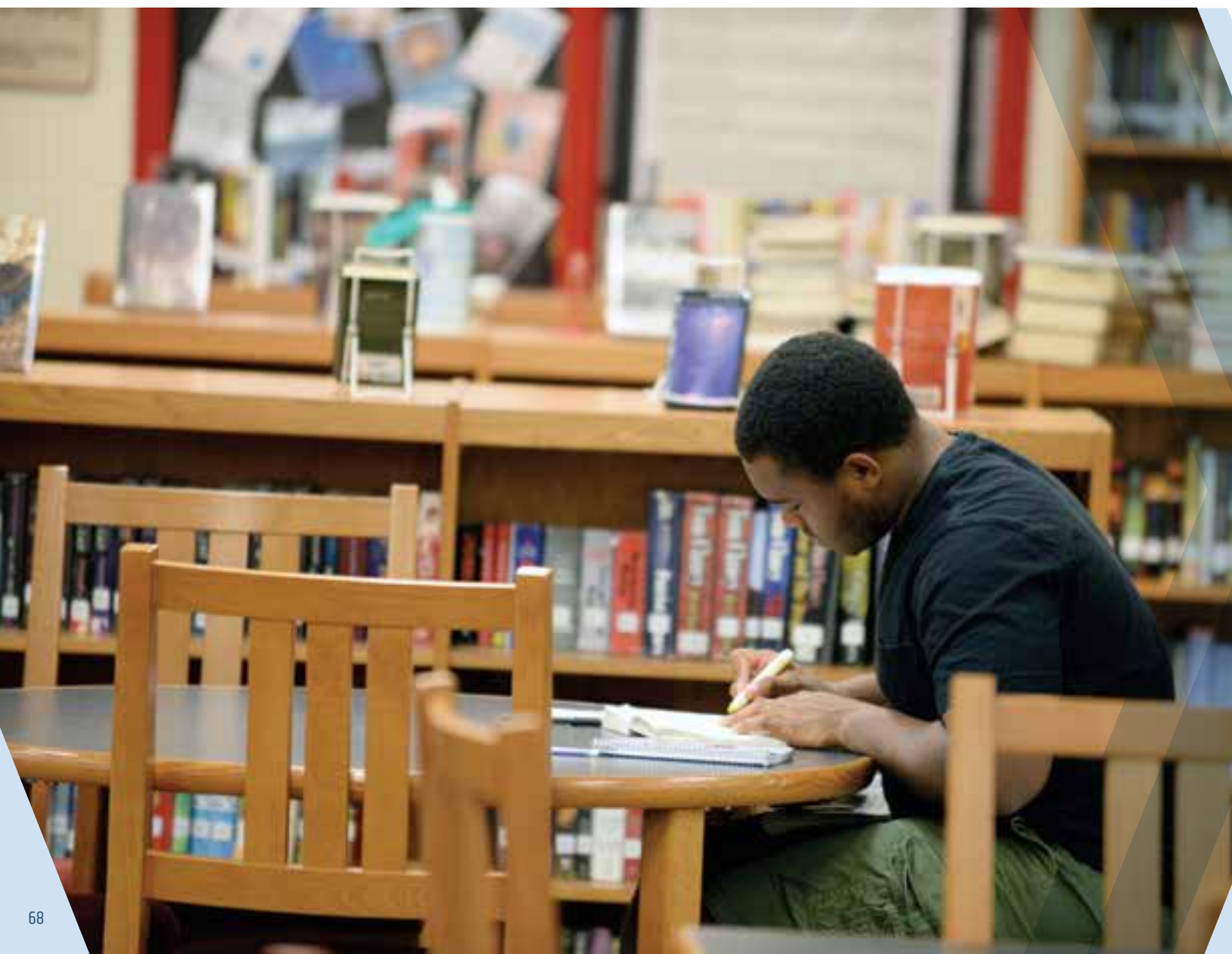
**Renée Copeland**

Executive Assistant & Coordinator of  
Partner Relations

**Dr. June Keel**

Business Associate

Thank you to our graduate fellows and interns.



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