

The Alignment of Tennessee's Education Initiatives: Public Chapter 529, 2011

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Public Chapter 529 of 2011 directed the Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability to prepare a report on the following K-12 education initiatives:

- Race to the Top / Tennessee First to the Top
- Hyde Family Foundation education partnerships
- Niswonger Foundation school partnership program
- Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE)
- The Tennessee Charter School Incubator
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- The Diploma Project
- The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)

Public Chapter 529 also requested an analysis of the alignment of these initiatives with concerns about educational performance.

This brief provides a review of the concerns and significant reform efforts that have shaped American education policy over the past 30 years, and seeks to develop an understanding of how these broader currents have found expression in Tennessee's own unique policy context.

Education policy has risen in importance at all governmental levels over the past several decades

largely in response to persistent concerns about student achievement trends. The three most prominent concerns that have shaped the course of education reform are:

- The Expectations Gap
- Global Competitiveness
- The Achievement Gap

The brief considers each of the three through the lens of a specific event or development in education policy history.

The Expectations Gap

The expectations gap can be defined as the gap between what a student knows upon graduating from high school and what the student needs to know to be successful in postsecondary education or the workforce. With statistics showing that more than two-thirds of new jobs will require some type of postsecondary education and training, policymakers have ever more intently focused on ensuring that students graduate from high school with the skills needed for success in postsecondary education and the workforce.

A specific illustration of this general concern can be found in the American Diploma Project (ADP) and its Tennessee affiliate, the Tennessee Diploma Project. The ADP was launched by Achieve in partnership with the Education Trust and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in 2001. Achieve itself was created in 1996 by the nation's governors and corporate leaders as a nonprofit education reform organization focused on helping states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability systems.

This brief is adapted from remarks presented to the House Education Committee on January 24, 2012, and to the Senate Education Committee on January 25, 2012.

Tennessee joined the American Diploma Project as an affiliate state in 2007. The state's implementation of the American Diploma Project took the form of new college and career-ready graduation requirements (including an additional year of high school level math), a new assessment policy, and new college and career-ready standards for math, English/language arts, and science. These standards were developed with input from the business community and higher education.

All of these changes were meant to increase the rigor of the state's academic standards and bring about alignment between the standards and the college and career-ready expectations for students – that is, to close the expectations gap.

Global Competitiveness

The global competitiveness concern rests on recognizing the linkage between educational outcomes and national outcomes. This concern can be considered on the individual level – for example, that a K-12 student requires a high quality education in order to succeed in today's complex, technologically advanced, global economy – all the way up to the national level – where America's future power, prestige, and prosperity rest in part upon improved educational performance.

Low proficiency in the subjects of science and math have given rise to concerns that America could lose its competitive edge in technology absent improvements in science and mathematics performance. The periodic release of results from international assessments regularly reinforce anxieties about America's competitive position relative to higher-performing nations, and that American preeminence in important fields, especially science and technology, will suffer.

A specific illustration of this general concern can be seen in the publication of the landmark report *A Nation at Risk* almost three decades ago. *A Nation at Risk* was released in 1983, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a body convened by the United States Department of Education under President Reagan's first secretary of education. Although there was already an emerging campaign for improving schools prior to *A Nation at Risk*, this publication was extremely influential in sparking and shaping a new wave of reforms in education.

The report's language strongly conveyed a sense that American education was in a state of crisis, and that immediate attention to the problems in education and implementation of solutions was a public policy imperative:

The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.

Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world.

If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge.

A Nation at Risk exemplified concerns about declining American educational performance and the ramifications for our nation's future. The report drew an explicit link between educational outcomes and national economic productivity and competitiveness.

The Achievement Gap

Another major concern about educational performance is the achievement gap. The achievement gap can be defined as the troubling performance gaps between many African American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their Asian and non-Hispanic white peers at the upper end, and the similar academic disparity between students from low-income and well-off families.

The achievement gap is present in grades, standardized test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, and other indicators. It has become a focal point of education reform efforts.

The achievement gap can also be considered in a collective sense, in that those schools and districts responsible for educating a high proportion of disadvantaged students (those students who are at the lower end of the performance scale) are of particular concern. Improving performance at these schools, particularly chronically underperforming schools, has increasingly been targeted by accountability systems, as can be seen through No Child Left Behind's more advanced sanctions and, more recently, through Tennessee's Achievement School District.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides a specific example of the achievement gap focus in public policy, though concerns about the achievement gap certainly existed prior to 2001. A number of significant education reforms at the federal level from the 1960s, including passage of the Elementary and Secondary Act, which created the Title I program, as well as Head Start directed federal resources toward students in poverty in an attempt to compensate for their socioeconomic circumstances.

However, No Child Left Behind represented a major advance in federal involvement in public schooling, and one of the law's main provisions was the requirement that schools and districts disaggregate student achievement data by student subgroup. This provision enjoyed strong support from across the political spectrum.

This requirement was aimed at addressing the masking of student subgroup performance in overall student performance. Coupled with advances in education data and statistics, particularly improved transparency and dissemination of results, No Child Left Behind provided us with a much clearer picture of the nature and extent of the achievement gap.

Policymakers have adopted a number of reforms in response to these three concerns (the expectations gap, a decline in global competitiveness, and the achievement gap). This brief considers three of the most significant reform themes:

- Standards-Based Reform
- Alternative Providers/Structures
- Human Educational Capital

The brief considers each of the three through the lens of a specific event or development in education policy history.

The standards-based reform movement has been the most influential reform movement in education over the past 30 years. It is the fundamental engine of modern education reform. Standards-based reform consists of three core elements:

- Standards identifying what students should know and be able to do.
- Alignment of instruction with those standards and use of assessments to measure student progress.
- Accountability systems establish rewards and sanctions based on assessment results.

The standards-based reform movement first emerged at the state level and has intensified over the last several decades. Tennessee created its own standards-based reform system in the early 1990s through passage of the Education Improvement Act.

By the year 2000, many states had established standards for student achievement in a variety of subject areas, or had mandated that local districts do so. Most states had developed a state testing program of some kind based on those standards. In 2001 the standards-based accountability movement was codified into federal law through passage of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Alternative Providers/Structures

"Alternative providers" refers to the rise of nontraditional providers of education services, whether nonprofit or for-profit. An example of such an organization would be Teach for America, a nontraditional teacher preparation program.

"Alternative structures" refers to provisions within a standards-based reform system that alter the traditional governance structure of a school or district. An example of an alternative structure would be Tennessee's Achievement School District. Alternative structures are typically a consequence imposed by an external authority on a school or district that repeatedly fails to meet achievement standards.

Focus on Educational Human Capital

This is the focal point of current education reforms. Recent examples of this area of reform in Tennessee include the new teacher evaluations and last year’s tenure and collaborative conferencing legislation.

Overall Conclusion

There is a substantial degree of alignment between concerns about education performance and the educational initiatives listed in Public Chapter 529. Exhibit 1 displays one way of categorizing the various initiatives and organizations that Public Chapter 529 listed.

Standards-Based Reform and Global Competitiveness

The Common Core State Standards Initiative illustrates the alignment between standards-based reform and concerns about global competitiveness. Race to the Top funds included \$360 million to help fund the development of new assessments that will be used to gauge student performance relative to the Common Core standards.

The impetus for creation of the Common Core standards was to raise standards, to align standards more closely with postsecondary education and work, and to enhance the nation’s global competitiveness. The Common Core standards were created with an eye toward the top-performing countries around the world, indicating the interrelatedness of this initiative with concerns about global competitiveness, as well as the expectations gap.

All but four states have now adopted the Common Core Standards, two consortia of states are developing

common tests for those standards, and 46 states and the District of Columbia are collaborating on establishing common accountability principles for student achievement through an initiative of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

No Child Left Behind was the embodiment of standards-based reform in federal law, but the Common Core Standards are also a good example of the three core elements of standards-based reform discussed earlier: standards, assessments, and accountability.

The Achievement Gap and the Expectations Gap

No Child Left Behind focused attention on student subgroups that consistently underperform. Tennessee’s Race to the Top application set specific achievement gap targets, and the state’s NCLB waiver, approved by the United States Department of Education in February 2012, proposes to reduce achievement gaps between subgroups of students (such as racial minorities and the economically disadvantaged) by about six percent a year.

The mission statements for the Hyde Foundation and the Niswonger Foundation both refer to the achievement gap. The mission statement for the education division of the Hyde Foundation specifies that “all children, whatever their individual circumstances, can succeed in school.” Accordingly, the primary focus of the Hyde Foundation’s education division is to “close the achievement gap through high-performing schools, great people and the use of effective public policy.” Similarly, one of the Niswonger Foundation’s core beliefs is that “all children can learn, regardless of race, gender, or economic status.”

Exhibit 1: Categorizing initiatives in Public Chapter 529

Laws	No Child Left Behind (ESEA) Race to the Top (grant program funded by ARRA) Tennessee First to the Top
National education reform movements	American Diploma Project (with state-level initiatives, such as the Tennessee Diploma Project)
Tennessee-based nonprofit organizations	Hyde Foundation Niswonger Foundation SCORE The Tennessee Charter School Incubator
Other	International Baccalaureate Organization

An organizational focus on the expectations gap can be seen in the Niswonger Foundation’s Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium. The goals of the consortium include ensuring that all students, especially those from underrepresented

populations, graduate high school prepared for college and career, and improving the likelihood that students successfully complete college. The federal government provided the majority of the funding for this consortium through a \$21 million dollar competitive grant. The Niswonger Foundation and its consortium partners were responsible for raising over \$3.5 million in matching funds.

The mission of the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) is to (help) “ensure every student in Tennessee graduates high school prepared for college and career,” referencing both the achievement gap and the expectations gap.

The Tennessee Charter School Incubator espouses the following core beliefs: that charter schools are one of the best mechanisms to close the achievement gap between low-income students and students with a higher SES and also by race. The Incubator maintains that a “strong focus on preparing all students for college acceptance and completion” is one of the qualities that define a high quality charter school.

Alternative Providers / Structures and Human Educational Capital

Through its Race to the Top application, Tennessee pledged to expand its charter school network, implement a new teacher evaluation system, and turn around perpetually low-performing schools.

The approach to the problem of chronically low-performing schools has evolved over time. No Child Left Behind mandated escalating interventions, including state co-management and state takeover, for schools that repeatedly failed over a number of years to make adequate yearly progress. Today independent school operators, such as charter schools, are part of the mix for turning around a low-performing school.

The Achievement School District, created through Tennessee’s winning Race to the Top application, will rely on charter school operators as a solution for a number of low-performing schools.

The Tennessee Charter School Incubator’s primary goal is to grow and support new charter schools. The organization plans to partner with the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF) to open and support an additional 20 new charter schools in Nashville and Memphis by 2015.

Tennessee First to the Top: Achievement School District

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Background of the initiative

In January 2010, the Tennessee legislature enacted the “[Tennessee First to the Top Act](#),” which created the Achievement School District (“ASD” or “the district”), a new division of the Tennessee Department of Education.

The ASD is a key component of Tennessee’s strategy to address the persistently poor performance of many of its schools. Modeled after the [Recovery School District in Louisiana](#), which took over the vast majority of poor performing schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, the ASD has the ability to take over and operate persistently poor performing schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across the state. (Excerpt from the [job description of the Superintendent for the ASD](#))

Tennessee’s Race To The Top application proposed that the state use the ASD as a means to turn around its lowest-achieving schools. The application also described the ASD turnaround approach as “the foundation to reach the Tennessee Diploma Project goal of helping every student reach college- and career-readiness with all schools on a path to excellence.” Application authors also suggested that the ASD could provide a practical means for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to learn ways of successfully intervening in struggling schools.

Key Components of the Legislation Creating the Achievement School District

- For any school in the fourth year of improvement status (Restructuring I), authorizes the TDOE commissioner to remove the school from the jurisdiction of the current LEA and place it under the jurisdiction of the state’s Achievement School District. *TCA 49-1-602(f)(1)(C)(ii)*
- Authorizes the commissioner to contract with “one or more individuals, governmental entities or nonprofit entities to manage the day-to-day operations of any or all schools or LEAs placed in the achievement school district, including, but not limited to, providing direct services to students.” *TCA 49-1-614(b)*
- Authorizes the individual or entity receiving the contract for the ASD to apply to the commissioner for a waiver of any state board rule that “inhibits or hinders the ability of the school or LEA to achieve” AYP benchmarks. However, rules related to the following shall not be waived: federal and state civil rights; federal, state, and local health and safety; federal and state public records; immunizations; possession of weapons on school grounds; background checks and fingerprinting of personnel; federal and state special education services; student due process; parental rights; federal and state student assessment and accountability; open meetings, and at least the same equivalent time of instruction as required in regular public schools. *TCA 49-1-614(c)*
- Authorizes the individual or entity receiving the contract for the ASD to determine whether to continue to employ teachers working at any school placed in the ASD. However, any teacher whose employment is not continued is to continue employment under the LEA. *TCA 49-1-614(d)(1)*
- Revises the rights of teachers who continue to teach in a school placed in the ASD. The teachers retain the rights to accumulated sick leave, retirement benefits, pension and tenure status within an LEA, but not to contract rights referred to in *TCA 49-5-203* or to the Education Professional Negotiations Act. *TCA 49-1-614(d)(2)*
- Provides that the commissioner shall develop a transition plan for schools or LEAs placed in the ASD that achieve the required AYP benchmarks for two consecutive years for the purpose of returning the school or LEA to the jurisdiction of the local board of education. Any such plan is to be implemented after the school

or LEA achieves the AYP benchmarks for three consecutive years. *TCA 49-1-614(e)*

- Authorizes the commissioner to remove any school or LEA from the jurisdiction of the ASD at any time. *TCA 49-1-614(f)*

Activities

August 2010:

In partnership with Louisiana's Recovery School District and New Schools for New Orleans, Tennessee's Department of Education was awarded \$30 million in a competitive federal grant program designed to support and expand charter schools. Almost \$3 million from the award will go directly to the ASD and \$6.8 million will be allocated for new charter schools in Tennessee (particularly in Memphis and Nashville). The grant was awarded as part of the Investing in Innovation program, commonly referred to as i3.

This project will take an innovative model of education reform developed in New Orleans and spread it to other urban school districts struggling to turn around failing schools. The heart of this model lies in building the permanent infrastructure and capacity to replace persistently low-performing schools with charter restarts executed by high-performing charter organizations. With the support of a five-year i3 Validation Grant, the project partners will be able to expand capacity in New Orleans to turn around the bottom 5% of failing schools each year, and then replicate this model in Memphis and Nashville creating the foundation for longer-term scale-up to other districts serving high-need students across the nation. To make this aspiration a reality, New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) has partnered with Louisiana's Recovery School District (RSD) and Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD). The primary grant activity will be sub-granting funds to high-performing charter operators to execute school turnarounds through the charter restart model. Only those operators with a robust, quasi-experimental data-backed performance will be funded to replicate. To augment supply of high quality charter

operators, NSNO and ASD will incubate new CMOs, and to ensure this quality standard is being upheld, RSD and ASD will provide the crucial turnaround infrastructure. This enhanced infrastructure, combined with expanded charter operator capacity, will ensure that strong turnarounds are the consistent course of action when a school is persistently low performing.

May 2011:

Gov. Bill Haslam [announced the hiring of Chris Barbic](#) as superintendent of the ASD. The Tennessee Department of Education also [announced](#) that the state would co-manage five failing schools during the 2011–12 school year. The schools, four in Memphis City Schools and one in Hamilton County, will be managed by the state as part of the Achievement School District.

The Department of Education proposes to begin by taking in and co-managing five schools under the Achievement School District in 2011–2012 with expansion in the following years. The schools have been identified based on a definition including the U.S. Department of Education's Persistently Lowest Achieving status, the state accountability status and a statewide lowest five percent designation. Going forward, the Department will work with each district, schools and communities to identify the best option to support continuous improvement in at-risk schools.

Tennessee Department of Education representatives, along with representatives from New Jersey and Oklahoma, attended a [series of workshops and briefings organized by the Louisiana Department of Education](#).

These sessions described the changes that have taken place in Louisiana over the past six years, including the creation of the Recovery School District (RSD) that redeveloped unproductive schools in New Orleans and elsewhere, the restructuring of the LDOE, and efforts to create a new performance-based organizational culture in state and local education agencies.

Presenters included LDOE staff, RSD administrators, academic observers, LDOE's nonprofit service partners (e.g., teacher training programs, charter school operators), and education stakeholders in New Orleans. What emerged was a candid discussion of the LDOE's overall school improvement goals, the steps taken to achieve those objectives, and in some cases the missteps made in the effort to dramatically turn around a large number of schools in a relatively short time and to prompt improvements in all schools across the state.

August 1, 2011:

The ASD released a request for applications from organizations interested in opening charter schools in ASD attendance zones for the 2012–13 school year. The ASD will award \$6.8 million in start-up funding as part of the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation grant.

November 15, 2011:

Awards for three charter operators were announced. The operators will open three new schools beginning in the 2012–13 school year. Two of the organizations will operate schools in Memphis: Gestalt Community Schools will open a new middle school, Nexus Learning Academy, and the second Memphis school, Cornerstone Prep, will open as an elementary school. In Nashville, LEAD Public Schools will open its third LEAD Academy middle school. According to ASD staff, the next step for the three school operators is to determine specifically where to operate in Memphis and Nashville, which will be announced in mid-January.

The ASD is collaborating with national third-party organizations throughout the process of identifying and working with school operators: the National Association of Charter School Authorizers led the charter application and review process; the Center for Research on Education Outcomes of Stanford University evaluated and selected the existing charter operators applying for the i3 funding; and New Schools for New Orleans will assist charter operators approved to open schools in 2012–13. "The goal of the funds awarded in Tennessee will be to build the permanent

infrastructure and capacity to replace persistently low-performing schools with charter restarts executed by high-performing charter organizations."

See Exhibit 2 for a timeline of expected ASD activities for 2010–11, 2011–12, 2012–13, and 2013–14.

Future activities

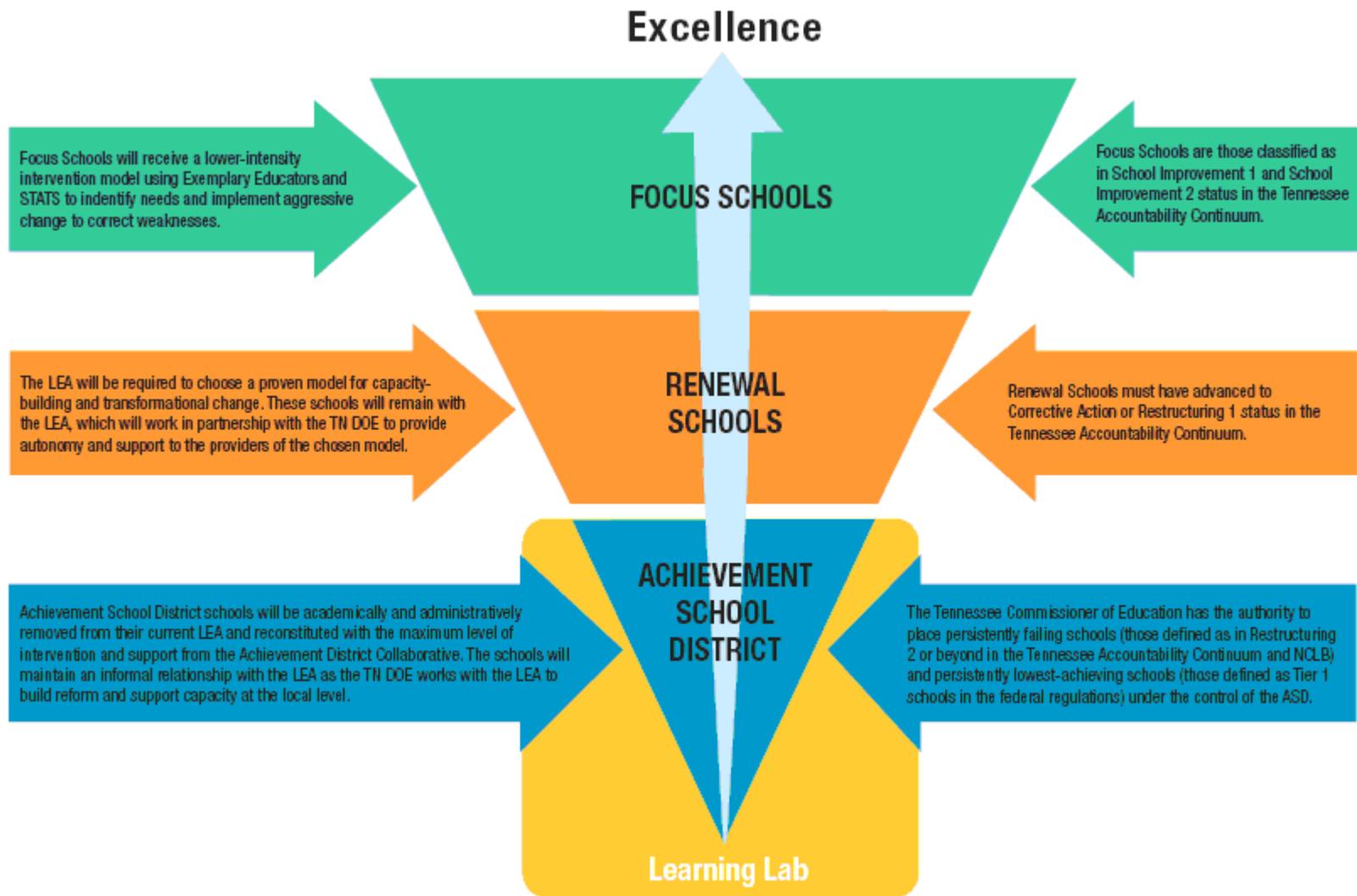
Under current NCLB requirements, Tennessee has 34 schools that are eligible for the ASD. Under the proposed waiver request to USDOE, Tennessee has 85 schools (the lowest-achieving five percent of the state's schools) that are ASD-eligible. If the waiver is approved as expected, ASD officials emphasize that the state will not be taking over 85 schools. The ASD will proceed incrementally—many of the schools will initially be on a watch list, which will be prioritized according to growth (TVAAS scores) and feeder patterns.

Related Reports

In June 2011, the Center on Reinventing Public Education published a working paper titled *On Recovery School Districts and Stronger State Education Agencies: Lessons from Louisiana*, documenting the results of the workshops and briefings organized by the Louisiana Department of Education.

The Tennessee Department of Education included the development of the Achievement School District in Appendix E of its [application for Race to the Top](#).

Tennessee Pyramid of Intervention



All schools in Tennessee will receive state support to put them on a trajectory toward excellence. Supports include: Common Core Standards and balance assessment systems, access to the enhanced longitudinal data system via the data dashboard, training on using data for instructional decision making, STEM initiative opportunities, changes in teacher and principal preparation and individualized support for improvement, the multiple measure teacher and principal evaluation system for coaching and decision making, and ongoing research and evaluation of what's working in Tennessee.

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Race to the Top application, Appendix E-2-4, p. E-2.

Goal: To establish an effective state Achievement School District that will turn around the state’s persistently lowest-achieving and persistently failing schools, transition them effectively back to their LEAs with sustainable strategies for continued success, and identify best practices to support LEAs in turning around and sustaining the improvements in such schools in the future.

Measurements:

- The number and percent of schools in ASD that make AYP
- The AYP status of the ASD at the LEA level
- The number and percent of schools that are not identified as Tier 1
- The percent of ASD teachers identified as highly effective, effective, and ineffective
- The percent of students in ASD who graduate on time or graduate through the extended graduation
- The percent of students in ASD who meet ACT benchmarks
- The percent of graduates who enroll in post-secondary institutions
- The value-added scores for the ASD in reading, language arts, and science
- The number and percent of ASD schools identified to transition back to home LEAs
- The development and implementation of transitional strategies for successful ASD schools
- The identification and dissemination of “best practices” to all LEAs
- The identification and removal of barriers, such as state laws, policies, or negotiated contracts, that prevent persistently low-achieving schools achieve success in their home LEAs
- The number and percent of ASD schools and ASD aggregate that meet academic goals and targets of the grant as outlined in A(1)(iii)

The responsible party will be the Superintendent of the Achievement School District

	Year 1 2010-11	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Year 4 2013-2014
<p><i>Achievement School District (Persistently lowest-achieving schools and Restructuring 2 and beyond)</i></p>	Notify LEAs, schools, students, parents, and communities of 13 schools to the ASD	Orientation and professional development for new school staff in Summer 2011	Orientation and professional development for new school staff in Summer 2012	Begin development of transition plan with LEAs for schools identified for possible transition
	Identify / select nonprofit partners for human capital and new school creation	School begins and implement chosen model	School continues to implement chosen model	Orientation and professional development for new school staff in Summer 2012
	13 identified schools remain in their home districts as they plan with state consultants and partners to transition to ASD in school year 2011-12	ASD and partners maintain regular two-communication with key external and internal constituencies	ASD and partners maintain regular two-communication with key external and internal constituencies	School continues to implement chosen model
	Establish and implement new ASD state office	On-going professional development	On-going professional development	ASD and partners maintain regular two-communication with key external and internal constituencies
	Recruit and select leader for ASD	ASD staff and partners regularly meet to evaluate progress on implementation, revise when necessary, and evaluate student outcomes	ASD staff and partners regularly meet to evaluate progress on implementation, revise when necessary, and evaluate student outcomes	On-going professional development
	Execute contract with external partners	ASD staff monitors scope of contract for partners	ASD staff and partners regularly meet to evaluate progress on implementation, revise when necessary, and evaluate student outcomes	ASD staff and partners regularly meet to evaluate progress on implementation, revise when necessary, and evaluate student
	ASD representatives work with selected schools, communities and partners to choose one of four intervention models to	ASD staff analyzes performance measures and makes necessary adjustments for subsequent	ASD staff monitors scope of contract for partners	

	Year 1 2010-11	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Year 4 2013-2014
	<p>implement</p> <p>ASD applies for Title I school improvement funds for 13 schools</p> <p>ASD and 13 schools develop approved school improvement plans</p> <p>ASD state office establishes procedures for logistical issues, such as transportation, maintenance, etc.</p> <p>ASD and partners recruit and hire employees for 13 schools</p>	<p>year</p>	<p>ASD staff analyzes performance measures and make necessary adjustments for subsequent year</p> <p>ASD staff evaluates individual school progress to determine which schools will begin transition plans for returning to home LEA at end of school year 2015-16</p>	<p>outcomes</p> <p>ASD staff monitors scope of contract for partners</p> <p>ASD staff analyzes performance measures and make necessary adjustments for subsequent year</p> <p>ASD staff evaluates individual school progress to determine which schools will begin transition plans for returning to home LEA at end of school year 2015-16</p>
<i>Transitional Strategies</i>	<p>Begin research and discussion of transition strategies</p> <p>Begin research and discussion of indicators of success for schools to indicate readiness for transition (measurements indicated in the measurement statements)</p> <p>Begin research and</p>	<p>Continue research and discussion of transition strategies</p> <p>Continue research and discussion of indicators of success for schools to indicate readiness for transition, including measurements</p> <p>Continue research and discussion of indicators of</p>	<p>Continue research and discussion of transition strategies</p> <p>Finalize indicators of success for schools to indicate readiness for transition, including measurements</p> <p>Finalize indicators of district readiness and capacity to assume</p>	<p>Continue research and discussion of transition strategies</p> <p>Monitor the continued progress of schools identified for transition</p> <p>Apply indicators to determine first group of schools eligible for transition</p>

	Year 1 2010-11	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Year 4 2013-2014
	discussion of indicators of district readiness and capacity to assume responsibilities for successful schools to transition	district readiness and capacity to assume responsibilities for successful schools to transition	responsibilities for successful schools to transition Apply indicators to determine first group of schools eligible for transition	
<i>Best Practices</i>	Execute contract with state evaluation team (TN CRED) to identify best practices (please see Section C)	Team begins evaluation and identification of potential best practices	Team continues to evaluate and identify potential best practices Team identifies promising practices State disseminates promising practices State identifies any barriers in laws or policies that prevent implementation of best practices and works to remove them	Team continues to evaluate and identify potential best practices Team identifies promising practices State disseminates promising practices State identifies any barriers in laws or policies that prevent implementation of best practices and works to remove them

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Race to the Top Application, Appendix E-2-7, pp. E-38-E41.

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American Diploma Project and the Tennessee Diploma Project

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Background

The American Diploma Project (ADP) is an initiative launched by Achieve in partnership with The Education Trust and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in 2001. (Achieve was created in 1996 by the nation's governors and corporate leaders, as an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit education reform organization that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability.) In 2004, ADP published *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts*, the result of two years of research. The report includes English and mathematics benchmarks that describe the specific content and skills that graduates must have mastered by the time they leave high school if they expect to succeed in postsecondary education or in high-growth jobs.

To make college and career readiness a priority in the states, in 2005, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network. As of July 2011, the Network includes 35 states, including Tennessee. According to Achieve, through the ADP Network "Governors, state superintendents of education, business executives and college leaders are working to bring value to the high school diploma by raising the rigor of high school standards, assessments and curriculum and aligning expectations with the demands of postsecondary education and careers."

Achieve receives financial support from a number of sources, including the Battelle Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, and Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Tennessee's involvement with the American Diploma Project

In 2007, Tennessee joined the ADP with the purpose of minimizing the state's "expectations gap" – the gap between what a student knows upon graduating from high school and what the student needs to know to be successful in college or the workforce.

Achieve and other education partners developed a set of benchmarks on what high school graduates need to know in the core subjects of English and math to succeed in first year college courses and in the workforce. Achieve worked with Tennessee education officials to ensure the alignment between the state's new high school standards and the skills needed to succeed in both postsecondary and work settings. Tennessee's ADP activities—called the Tennessee Diploma Project (TDP)—included the business and higher education communities as partners to help in clearly defining the skills needed for work and college.

With last year's implementation of the TDP our state's educational leaders acknowledged the need to better prepare graduating high school seniors to be college- or career-ready. By requiring all students in Tennessee to complete a rigorous curriculum in high school, the state is helping those students leave high school with the knowledge and skills they need for lifelong success—regardless of their immediate post high school plans.

Statistics now show more than two-thirds of new jobs will require some type of post-secondary education and training, mandating a greater focus on the skills needed for college and the workforce. For those graduates entering college, the TDP is committed to preparing them to take entry level college courses without the need for remedial instruction, increasing the chance for success. The Race to the Top proposal and the TDP include a focus on strategic assessments which include early and regular evaluations of student learning. These assessments will be the key to providing teachers and principals with a dashboard view of each student. This data can be utilized to intervene or recreate successful teaching methods.

Activities and outcomes of the Tennessee Diploma Project as a part of the American Diploma Project Network

The purpose of the Tennessee Diploma Project is to raise Tennessee’s standards and curriculum to better prepare students for success after high school. The Tennessee Diploma Project is an affiliate of Achieve Inc.’s American Diploma Project and adheres to its goals and mission. Efforts in Tennessee have focused on three areas, all of which were included in the new high school policy adopted by the Tennessee State Board of Education in January 2008:

- College and Career-Ready Graduation Requirements—Among the changes: Students must complete more credits to graduate, including an additional year of high school level math.
- Strategic Assessments—All students will take tests in the 8th and 10th grades to measure whether they are on track to meet Tennessee’s college and career-ready graduation requirements. These pre-tests are meant to identify gaps in learning early enough to allow time for additional instruction so students can

remain on track to graduate. Students will also take a college-readiness test—either the SAT or ACT—in the 11th grade. In high school, end-of-course tests will be administered for 10 core subjects. These exams will count as a percentage of the student’s final course grade.

- College and Career-Ready Standards—New state standards for math, English/language arts, and science curriculum standards were adopted and implemented in LEAs across the state. “These revisions were based on Tennessee’s desire to increase rigor in the academic standards and provide for alignment to college- and career-ready expectations for students (Tennessee Diploma Project).” The new standards were developed with input from the business community and higher education. The state’s involvement with the ADP drove much of the work done to develop the new standards. Achieve worked with Tennessee education officials to ensure the alignment between the state’s new high school standards and the skills needed to succeed in both postsecondary and work settings.

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Tennessee First to the Top: Common Core Curriculum Standards

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Background of the national initiative

An excerpt from the Common Core State Standards Initiative website expresses the project's beginnings, methodology, and purpose:

The [Common Core State Standards Initiative](#) is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

The NGA Center and CCSSO received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, postsecondary educators (including community colleges), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Following the initial round of feedback, the draft standards were opened for public comment, receiving nearly 10,000 responses.

The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K–12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;

- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

Activities of the national initiative

The main activity of the initiative has been to develop common core standards in English/Language Arts and Mathematics for grades K–12 that states then adopt and implement, making standards consistent from state to state. Following Tennessee's adoption of updated standards in 2008, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) led a partnership of educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups to develop a set of common standards for math and English/language arts. Other partners included Achieve, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), as well as 48 states (including Tennessee).

As described in the materials for the July 30, 2010, Tennessee State Board of Education meeting, "[These Kindergarten–12 Common Core State Standards](#) represent a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers. The purposes for the creation of the Common Core State Standards include:

- fewer, higher, and clearer academic standards;
- alignment with college and work expectations;
- current educational research and evidence;
- benchmarking to high performing countries and states; and
- rigorous standards emphasizing skill and application of content."

The Common Core standards define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They also correspond to “College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards.” The Common Core website explains that “the CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.”

The State Board of Education describes the organization of the Common Core standards and their relationship to the College and Career Readiness standards as follows:

The [K–8 Math Standards](#) are organized by Domain, Clusters, and Standards. The Domain is considered the overarching ideas that connect topics across the grade levels. The Clusters are designed to demonstrate the grade-by-grade progression of task complexity. The Standards define what a student should be able to know and do at that grade level. The 9–12 Math Standards are organized by conceptual categories: *number and quantity, algebra, functions, modeling, geometry, statistics and probability*.

The [K–12 English/Language Arts Standards](#) are benchmarked to 10 College and Career Readiness Standards. K–8 standards are listed by grade level. Standards in grades 9–12 are listed in two-year bands to allow flexibility in course design. The K–12 standards are separated into four strands: *Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening*. The use of media is integrated into all areas of the K–12 standards. The standards require students to learn information across disciplines including literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. The K–12 English/language arts standards are based on learning progressions. Students are required to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and application through several avenues and environments suitable for the work and college environments.

Activities of the initiative in Tennessee

The Tennessee State Board of Education adopted the Common Core Standards at its July 30, 2010, meeting. Tennessee state law gives the State Board of Education the duty and authority to set policies governing all curricula and courses of study in K–12 public schools, including the adoption of standards.

In June 2011, the Tennessee Department of Education released documents displaying a [crosswalk between Tennessee’s current standards and the Common Core Standards](#). According to the Department’s [First to the Top website](#), “the Common Core State Standards are already closely aligned with Tennessee’s existing standards.”

The Department began trainings on implementation of the Common Core Standards in May 2011, and added training materials to the Tennessee Electronic Learning Center in June and July 2011. By August 2011, more than 4,000 teachers and administrators had attended TDOE training sessions on understanding and implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). TDOE personnel have also presented at in-service trainings for several districts. Most schools have reportedly begun implementing CCSS in grades K–2 this school year.

TDOE is also working with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium. Tennessee is one of 24 states that make up the PARCC Consortium. In early June, Tennessee joined with other PARCC states for the first of several state team conferences related to the transition to Common Core standards and implementation of the PARCC assessments.

In the fall of 2011, the PARCC consortium released [draft model content frameworks](#) in English language arts / literacy and mathematics for public review.

The PARCC Model Content Frameworks identify the “big ideas” in the Common Core State Standards for each grade level, help determine the focus for the various PARCC assessment components, support the development of the PARCC assessment blueprints, and provide guidance to district-

and school-level curriculum leaders around the development of aligned instructional materials.

The draft frameworks were made available for public review from August 3 through August 17—PARCC extended the review period through August 31 when stakeholders requested additional time for more substantive review. A survey was also posted to collect public comments. Final model content frameworks, which include adjustments resulting from the feedback, were released in the fall of 2011. The [assessments](#) being developed by the two consortia are scheduled to be in place in 2014–15, and “are expected to include a range of measures, including performance tasks that students complete during the school year and tools for teachers to enable them to assess their own students periodically and adjust instruction accordingly.”

Related Reports

Achieve has [developed a set of materials](#) to help states and others interested in better understanding the Common Core State Standards. The materials focus on the organization, content and evidence base used to support the standards, including fact sheets that describe the content areas and address frequently

asked questions about the standards. The materials also include tools to help states compare current standards to the Common Core State Standards and an Implementation Workbook to help states successfully implement the new standards.

Frequently updated information about the Common Core Standards also appears on the [Tennessee First to the Top website](#).

In 2010, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute released a report comparing states’ curriculum standards to the Common Core standards. (The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a national education research and advocacy group, has published several analyses of states’ standards over the last 15 years.) The report gave Tennessee’s English Language Arts standards a grade of A-, and said that “Tennessee’s standards are generally more straightforward, clear, and specific than the Common Core.” The report gave Tennessee’s Mathematics standards a grade of C, describing the state standards as “mediocre” and describing the Common Core math standards as “significantly superior to what the Volunteer State has in place today.”

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First to the Top: Data Systems

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Background

Tennessee's 2010 Race to the Top grant of \$502 million from the U.S. Department of Education was divided into seven funding categories. One of those was "data systems," with a budget of \$54.5 million, just under 11 percent of the total grant. The data systems portion of the grant is to be used in four main areas: TVAAS pre-service training, use of data to improve instruction, creation of data dashboards, and expansion of the state's longitudinal data system.

Need for Data

A 2008 report for the U.S. Department of Education said, "the collection, analysis, and use of education data are central to the improvement of student outcomes envisioned by No Child Left Behind." Tennessee's Race to the Top application emphasized the importance of education data to all other reform efforts: "Underlying all of our human capital reforms is a data system that is second-to-none--the largest student- and teacher-level database ever assembled, permitting value-added analysis and examinations of teacher effectiveness --which we will expand to new frontiers in this application."

The analysis and use of student data is considered by many policymakers and educators to lead to better planning, resource allocation, student placement, and curriculum and instructional choices.

Federal Role

"In 2007, through the America COMPETES [Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science] Act (Public Law 110-69), the federal government codified the 12 elements of a P-16 [preschool through grade 16, or bachelor's degree completion] education data system." In 2009, using the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant funds, the federal government encouraged development and use of these data systems by requiring states to commit to building data systems that consist of all the elements indicated in America COMPETES. States are required to report annually on their progress in implementing a statewide longitudinal data system that includes the 12 elements.

Background of Tennessee's Data Systems

In November 2005, the Institute of Education Sciences (part of the U.S. Department of Education) awarded the Tennessee Department of Education a three-year, \$3.7 million grant to implement a "longitudinal data system" for preschool through grade 12 (P-12). The intent of the Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (TLDS) was to collect, analyze, and use individual student data over multiple school years and multiple schools, tracking students throughout their academic lives. "This data could then be used for decision-making at the state, district, school, and teacher levels to improve student learning, stimulate research to increase student achievement, and close achievement gaps." The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) began a higher education database in 2004 after passage of the lottery scholarship bill, and in 2008 Tennessee created a teacher education database, which for the first time incorporated data from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Department of Education, and the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research.

In 2009, Tennessee developed a proposal to expand its data system further. This proposal, titled "TLDS 360: Tennessee Longitudinal Data System 360-degree View of Students," was submitted as part of its Race to the Top grant application.

Tennessee also has a nationally-known value-added data system. The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), "built in the 1990s when few states were attempting it," is a statistical method to measure the effect of a teacher or school on the academic progress of students from year to year. "As powerful as the current data system has grown to be, Tennessee has only scratched the surface in how we use that data to enhance learning, improve teaching, make policy and investment decisions, and pinpoint best practices for scaling across the state."

Planned Activities and Actions

Tennessee proposes to use its Race to the Top funding to build on its existing longitudinal data system and its value-added data system to make them more accessible and useful for teachers, principals, district and state leaders, and policy makers, and, thus, more effective decision-making tools. Key components of the state's Race to the Top application include:

- expand access to TVAAS data and provide training for all educators on how to maximize its use for instructional decisions, through teacher training programs and professional development
- expand the existing longitudinal data system from a P-12 to a P-20 system, adding college and workforce data for a complete educational picture, as well as including data from social service, health, juvenile justice, and other agencies that impact children and their educational outcomes
- create data dashboards that integrate data from the longitudinal and TVAAS systems that can provide teachers needed data to differentiate instruction to help students achieve more academic growth and to provide an early-warning system of potential problems, particularly dropping out of school
- contract with outside organizations to build capacity and provide support to local districts in how to use data to improve student learning, enhance educator effectiveness, and accomplish educational goals, specifically
 - provide training on how to maximize value-added data and how to implement formative instructional practices and balanced assessments throughout the year to improve instruction
 - support districts as they research, develop, and implement strategic performance incentives, including a differentiated pay program

- provide research and innovation expertise to identify effective practices and interventions and replicate them across the state
- support the Tennessee Department of Education in developing long-term capacity to deliver the outcomes outlined in Race to the Top

The expectations are that with better access to expanded data systems in easier-to-use formats (like the data dashboard) teachers can better target students' academic weaknesses. Analysis of data patterns can help educators and stakeholders identify best practices and key points that affect student success, both in achievement levels and graduation rates.

TVAAS Pre-Service Training

To give future Tennessee teachers grounding in how to use data from the state's value-added system (TVAAS), the state will integrate training components into college teacher preparation programs. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is working with two contractors, SAS Institute and Battelle for Kids, to develop and implement these TVAAS training components.

SAS is developing an eight-hour TVAAS training module that will be added to research methods courses in all teacher preparation programs. In March 2011, THEC and SAS hosted six trainings for teacher education faculty as a first step to integrating this component into the curriculum. A memo of understanding was signed in fall 2011 allowing institutions of higher education to access existing training modules—originally developed by Battelle for Kids to help current teachers use TVAAS—for use in teacher training programs.

After pilot testing in 2012, the TVAAS Pre-Service Training program should be fully implemented by fall 2013.

State Longitudinal Data System

The Department of Education and its partner, the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER), will collaborate with

THEC and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to expand the state's existing P-12 longitudinal data system to a P-20 system. CBER will coordinate the development and use of the extensive data system. ESP Solutions Group, Inc, the contractor chosen to build the P-20 data warehouse, will create web access and reporting capabilities and train CBER staff on how to administer and operate the warehouse. The system is scheduled for completion in July 2013.

The state envisions this expanded system will improve educational outcomes through increased access to and use of education data, better identification of factors that affect student achievement, a clearer understanding of best practices, better targeting of teacher professional development, and improved policy and investment choices. The system will integrate academic data from pre-school participation through college, with data on health, children's services, mental health, delinquency, and with workforce data, like employment status and earnings.

Initially, data will be collected from the Department of Education, THEC, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Other departments are likely to contribute in the future, such as

- Department of Children's Services
- Department of Health
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Correction
- Bureau of TennCare
- Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth

Other enhancements to the system funded through Race to the Top include improving data quality by moving records securely from one system to another through a software data cleansing application, such as when a student moves from one school district to another or from high school to postsecondary education. Also, an eTranscript application will allow analysis of where Tennessee high school students apply to college, where they are admitted, and where they actually attend. This system will also simplify transfer of academic records between high schools when students move from school to school, and will

allow postsecondary institutions to quickly update academic records for newly admitted students.

Although not part of Race to the Top, Ed-Fi is a new education data standard developed through the Dell Foundation that facilitates data exchange between different data systems in the K-12 education sector. Dell's Ed-Fi standard allows educators and researchers to access K-12 information from state and local systems even before longitudinal data systems are aligned. "Ed-Fi works with multiple longitudinal warehouses in the same way an ATM system might connect to multiple banks to identify a customer's account. It can pull data from various warehouses in a core set of areas, including demographics, attendance, grades, behavior reports, formative assessments, standardized test scores, and special education information, and translate them into a simplified format. The tool allows states and districts to develop their own tracking reports for individual and cohorts of students based on risk indicators like absenteeism."

Tennessee is one of five states—including Colorado, Delaware, Louisiana, and Texas—that have signed on to use Dell's data standard as of July 2011. The system is designed to be compatible with and enhance existing data systems and does not require any specific hardware or software choices.

Data Dashboards

Data dashboards display TVAAS data in a user-friendly format that allows teachers and principals to see students' achievement patterns and project future achievement. A successful dashboard initiative will "significantly increase teacher, school, and district-level use of previously inaccessible, underused information" and allow educators to better identify specific students' needs. SAS developed dashboards that project students' future TCAP and ACT test scores and predict their college readiness. The Department of Education contracted with SAS to provide them to districts statewide; dashboards on both academic achievement and college readiness were available to districts by October 2011.

Early Warning Data System

The Early Warning Data System will pull specific data from the state's existing longitudinal data and analyze it

Tennessee's improved data systems will also be of interest to researchers, and to make the widest possible use of its data, the state has created the Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TNCRED), housed at Vanderbilt University. It is envisioned that experts from Tennessee and across the country will conduct ongoing evaluation of First to the Top initiatives as well as research more general questions in American education. The goals of the consortium are to support implementation of all reform efforts and ensure goals are met, identify best practices through research and share evidence on

state-of-the-art initiatives, and stimulate collaboration of all education stakeholders.

Teacher and Leader Evaluation Data system

In June 2011, the Department of Education selected My Learning Plans to develop a new data system for teacher and principal evaluations. As of November 2011, the first phase, which allows principals to enter observation scores for teachers, was active. The next two phases—the inputting of teachers' TVAAS scores and the 15 percent student achievement data—were not yet active at the time of publication.

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Tennessee First to the Top: Great Teachers and Leaders Initiatives

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Background

In 2010, Tennessee was awarded a \$501.8 million federal Race To The Top (RTTT) grant. Improving the quality of teachers and leaders was one of the four key provisions of Tennessee's application in that grant competition. This section provides an overview of the Great Teachers and Leaders reform initiatives in Tennessee's First to the Top (FTTT) efforts, describes the initial plans from Tennessee's RTTT application, reviews the current implementation of the Great Teachers and Leaders reform initiatives, and explains the expected outcomes of the initiatives.

Introduction

Tennessee's original plans for Great Teachers and Leaders, as described in the RTTT application, included 15 specific initiatives. (See Exhibit 1.) Tennessee's approved RTTT budget allocated over 11 percent of RTTT funding (\$57,568,968) for these initiatives. The four main goals of the Great Teachers and Leaders initiatives are to:

- Create a new evaluation system for teachers and principals that uses student growth as one of multiple measures;
- Expand data use to close the teacher equity gap between high-poverty/high-minority schools and low-poverty/low-minority schools;
- Partner with higher education institutions to meet recruitment challenges; and
- Link professional development to teacher effectiveness based on student performance measures.

Exhibit 1 presents an overview of the Great Teachers and Leaders initiatives. For a more in-depth explanation and description of the initiatives, see the report *Tennessee's Race to the Top Application* published by the Tennessee State Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) at <http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/OREA/>.

In addition to these initiatives the state promised to:

- equip every teacher with access to value-added data specific to each classroom and/or school
- monitor and report access and usage of the TVAAS system at the teacher, school, and district levels
- train every teacher and principal in use of value-added data through a partnership with a nonprofit training partner
- contract with a nonprofit training partner who will train districts in use of value-added assessment for compensation and direct links to teachers' and principals' evaluations, with the aim of developing understanding of the practices used by effective educators and disseminating those practices statewide
- develop reporting mechanisms to disseminate data on performance of school districts and schools in developing more effective teachers and principals
- work with and provide support for its LEAs to create clear, differentiated career paths for teachers and principals, based on their performance levels using the new evaluation system each with expanded roles and higher compensation; provide support to participating LEAs to design and implement new career paths
- collect and publicly disseminate data, by school district and school, on tenure-granting rates
- annually assess and publish the correlation of tenure-granting rates with student outcomes (e.g., attendance, test scores, on-time graduation rates)
- build on the 2010 Teacher Equity Plan, which focuses on working with the six districts with the largest teacher equity gaps
- create a "dashboard" for each teacher's classroom in the state to determine students' achievement patterns/trends and weaknesses at a glance, as one tool to help teachers identify students' needs, adjust instruction, and improve achievement

Exhibit 1: Great Teachers and Leaders Initiatives in Tennessee’s Race to the Top Application

Initiative	Description	Budget
Innovation Acceleration Fund (IAF)	Tennessee will create an IAF for the creation and implementation of alternative compensation systems in school districts.	\$12,000,000
Leadership Action Tank	Tennessee will create a principal effectiveness laboratory called the Leadership Action Tank that will analyze student achievement data and create a list of best practices that improve student achievement.	\$9,994,762
SITES M	Tennessee will expand the SITES M program because it has a proven track record. The SITES M program partners Tennessee colleges and universities with elementary and middle schools to help teachers improve mathematics instruction.	\$8,006,800
Teacher and Principal Residencies	Residency programs that recruit, train, and/or support teachers and principals will be expanded.	\$8,000,000
Integrating PBS into Electronic Learning Center (ELC)	The ELC will be expanded to include a web-based Digital Learning Library (DLL) that will be provided by PBS.	\$4,302,000
UTeach Program Replication	The UTeach program is currently in place at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and University of Tennessee (UT)-Knoxville and it will be expanded to include UT-Chattanooga and University of Memphis. The program helps math and science majors earn their teaching certificate by the time they graduate. The goal of the program is to increase the number of math and science teachers in the state by graduating over 100 teachers every year.	\$4,137,500
Teacher and Principal Evaluation Development	The Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC) will create new annual teacher and principal evaluations, which will be given to the Tennessee State Board of Education (SBOE) for approval. The new evaluations can be used by districts to identify for dismissal those teachers and principals who are ineffective and who show no improvement. The evaluations will be used to determine professional development needs of teachers and principals.	\$2,410,984
Oak Ridge Associated Universities Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Teacher Training Academy Competitive Supplemental Fund	The Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) will contract with Oak Ridge Associated Universities to provide training to teachers on STEM learning.	\$2,997,800

Initiative	Description	Budget
Integrating Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) into Pre-service Training	Beginning in 2011, teacher preparation programs in Tennessee must include an eight-hour module on TVAAS.	\$1,402,000
Teacher Working Conditions Survey	Tennessee will create and administer a statewide Teacher Working Conditions Survey to assess, understand, and improve teaching and learning conditions across the state.	\$1,058,064
Teach Tennessee	Alternative teacher preparation programs, such as Teach Tennessee, The New Teacher Project (TNTP), and Teach for America (TFA), will be expanded. TFA will increase the number of corps members by 400 members and TNTP will “recruit, select, and prepare” 750 more teachers over the next five years.	\$640,800
Teacher Preparation Program Effectiveness Report Card	A panel comprised of representatives from the SBOE, DOE, Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), Tennessee Education Association (TEA), Tennessee Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and other stakeholders will work to design a report card for teacher preparation programs, decide how information in the report cards will be used, and decide whether to create a principal preparation program report card.	\$499,750
Distinguished Professionals Education Initiative (DPEI)	Tennessee will expand the DPEI through a competitive grant program to at least three large school districts. The DPEI is used by Knox County Schools to recruit and train highly qualified professionals in the math, science, and foreign language fields to be “adjunct” high school teachers.	\$400,000
School Leaders Supply and Demand Study	This study will be created by the THEC and the SBOE to accompany the Teacher Supply/Demand Study. The goal is to analyze data on current school leaders and use it to predict attrition rates and future hiring needs.	\$162,900

Sources: Tennessee Department of Education, “First to the Top Budget Part 1: Budget Summary Narrative,” <http://www.tn.gov/firsttothetop>; U.S. Department of Education, Race to the Top Application for Initial Funding CDFA Number: 84.395A [Tennessee], <http://www.tn.gov/education>; Tennessee Department of Education, “Race to the Top Application - Appendix D-1-6 – Proposal to Expand U-Teach,” <http://www.tennessee.gov/education>.

Activities

The following section outlines the key events relevant to the Great Teachers and Leaders initiatives.

1. Passage of the “First to the Top Act of 2010,” (Public Chapter 2, 2010), which:
 - a. Gives teacher preparation programs in Tennessee access to individual teacher effect data.
 - b. Creates a 15-member Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC) to develop a framework for

new annual teacher and principal evaluations.

- c. Requires annual evaluations of teachers and principals and establishes some of the evaluation criteria.
- d. Requires that the evaluations be “a factor in employment decisions, including, but not necessarily limited to, promotion, retention, termination, compensation, and the attainment of tenure status.”

- e. Allows LEAs to create their own teacher and principal salary schedules, which must be approved by the state.
 - f. Removes the provision that prohibited the use of teacher effect data as part of teacher evaluations and teacher tenure decisions until data from three years is obtained.
 - g. Creates the Teacher Professional Development Fund.
2. Development and implementation of new teacher evaluation system: Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM).
- a. The “First to the Top Act of 2010” created the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee (TEAC) to develop and make recommendations for the new annual teacher and principal evaluations. The new teacher evaluations must be comprised of the following measures: 50 percent qualitative (i.e., observations of teachers), 50 percent quantitative based on measures of student achievement / growth (35 percent – TVAAS; 15 percent – alternative student achievement measures).
 - b. The new teacher evaluation system (TEAM – Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model) has been adopted by the SBOE and was implemented statewide in the 2011-2012 school year. The SBOE approved three alternative teacher evaluation models: TIGER developed by the Association of Independent and Municipal Schools (AIMS), Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) developed by Memphis City Schools, and Project Coach developed by the Hamilton County Department of Education.
 - c. TEAC recommended measures for the 15 percent student achievement portion of TEAM. The SBOE approved these measures and a technical advisory group is currently working to scale these measures.
 - d. Individual TVAAS scores for teachers will be used for the 35 percent of the quantitative portion of the evaluation. A large number of teachers do not have individual TVAAS scores; they will use school wide TVAAS scores until alternative tests can be developed. DOE contracted with a group of six technical advisors to develop measures of student growth for teachers of non-tested subjects and review the recommendations of the teacher working groups. Twelve working groups comprised of educators from around the state made recommendations for alternative student growth measures. These measures are being piloted in 2011-12. In August 2011, DOE provided LEAs training and more information on the quantitative measures for non-tested subjects that will be used in TEAM. DOE released information on scaling TVAAS scores to rate teachers on a scale of 1–5 for TEAM in September 2011.
 - e. For the 50 percent qualitative component of the new teacher evaluations, DOE piloted four different observation rubrics; the TAP observation rubric was then chosen as the observation rubric for TEAM. DOE contracted with TAP and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching to provide TEAM training to school leadership teams and higher education faculty. DOE released guidelines for the evaluation of school services personnel (i.e., guidance counselors) and a modified TEAM rubric adapted for the observation of school services personnel in September 2011. DOE released guidance on the scoring intervals for TEAM in September 2011.
 - f. DOE released a request for proposals (RFP) for the Teacher and Leader Evaluation Data System. My Learning Plan was chosen as the vendor for the

- Teacher and Leader Evaluation Data System. The data system is currently under development. TEAM Observation data entry began in September 2011. In spring 2012, teachers will be able to access their observation data and track their progress.
- g. To communicate with and inform school districts, school administrators, and teachers about TEAM, DOE:
 - i. Hired nine TEAM consultants to provide training and information to districts.
 - ii. Is conducting monthly regional meetings to provide information.
 - iii. Launched the TEAM website in August 2011 to provide information to districts, school administrators, and teachers.
 - iv. Created webinars for educators and education stakeholders.
 - v. Is using Skype web-conferencing software to provide immediate assistance to LEAs when needed.
 - h. Approximately 6,000 school administrators and instructional leaders, who were assigned to observe teachers as part of TEAM, received four days of training in summer 2011; each was required to pass an online TEAM certification test. DOE provided training to another nine cohorts in fall 2011. Approximately 175 faculty members of higher education institutions in Tennessee received training on TEAM in spring and summer 2011; five more cohorts of higher education faculty were trained in fall 2011. The state plans to provide training to all higher education faculty and students in teacher preparation programs.
3. Development and implementation of new principal evaluation system.
 - a. The principal evaluation was field tested in spring 2011 and TN CRED conducted focus groups on the new evaluation.
 - b. The principal evaluation was approved by the SBOE in August 2011.
 - c. Training for Directors of Schools was provided via webinar in late August 2011.
 - d. Training for principals and assistant principals became available on the Electronic Learning Center (ELC) in September 2011.
 - e. TN CRED is continuing to research the principal evaluations and provide recommendations for improvement.
 - f. DOE released scoring intervals in September 2011.
 4. Creation of the Innovation Acceleration Fund (IAF) to fund the creation and implementation of alternative compensation systems in school districts.
 - a. Four school districts were chosen to receive funding through the Innovation Acceleration Fund: Knox County, Lexington City, Putnam County, and Trousdale County. Johnson County has also decided create an alternative salary schedule using funding from the federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant.
 - b. School districts who received funding through the IAF developed the alternative salary schedules in 2010-11 and submitted final proposals for "implementation plans for their compensation reforms efforts" on June 15, 2011.
 - c. Battelle for Kids and federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) program staff worked with the districts to develop the compensation plans.
 5. Creation of a Leadership Action Tank.
 - a. An RFP for the Leadership Action Tank is on hold pending the completion of

- the Tennessee Commissioner of Education's Strategic Action Plan.
6. Creation and administration of the Tennessee Teaching, Empowering, Learning, and Leading (TELL) Survey.
 - a. DOE in partnership with the New Teacher Center developed the TELL Survey and administered the survey in February 2011. DOE received the survey results (77 percent response rate), analyzed them, and posted them on the TELL website. DOE released a report on the results, "Executive Summary of General Trends," which described the key findings of the TELL Survey results.
 - b. DOE will be administering the TELL Survey every two years – the survey will be administered again in spring 2013.
 7. Integration of TVAAS into pre-service teacher training programs.
 - a. Staff from THEC and the SAS Institute provided training to higher education faculty on TVAAS. SAS has created 32 training modules and the rest were completed in fall 2011 at which time higher education faculty were able to provide feedback. THEC is currently in negotiations with SAS, but expects to pilot the program in spring 2012, provide training on the program in summer 2012, and implement the program in fall 2012 with full implementation in spring 2013.
 8. Provision of professional development for teachers and principals on TVAAS.
 - a. DOE contracted with SAS and Battelle for Kids to provide educators and pre-service teachers at Tennessee colleges and universities free access to TVAAS online learning modules.
 9. Creation of the *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*.
 - a. THEC and the SBOE released the *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs* in December 2010.
 - b. THEC worked with a committee of education stakeholders to revise the format of the report card. THEC released the new report card in the new format in November 2011.
 - c. THEC is currently releasing individual feedback reports to institutions to assist in program improvement.
 10. Creation of the Teacher and Principal Residency Grant Program.
 - a. The grants will support teacher and leader induction and mentoring programs in conjunction with higher education institutions in Memphis, Nashville and Chattanooga. There are two types of grants: Type 1 – Pre-Service Preparation and Type 2 – Exemplary Leadership. Memphis City Schools and Hamilton County Department of Education each received a \$2 million Type 1 Grant and Metro-Nashville Public Schools and Memphis City Schools each received a Type 2 Grant of approximately \$2 million.
 11. Provision of professional development on daily formative assessment practices.
 - a. DOE contracted with Battelle for Kids to provide professional development to districts. Battelle has conducted regional training for school districts, but will provide additional training as needed by LEAs.
 12. Creation of the Competitive Supplemental Fund.
 - a. Provides \$1.5 million in funding to the "districts whose share of funds is within the bottom 20 percent of total Local Education Agency (LEA) FTTT funds" for the development of alternative salary schedules and

turning around low-performing schools. Districts will use the funding “to encourage compensation reform and enhance school turn-around strategies.” In the first year, five districts (Bradford SSD, Hollow-Rock Bruceston SSD, Lexington City Schools, South Carroll County SSD, and Trousdale County) received \$50,000 to develop alternative salary schedules and two districts (Bradford and Williamson) received \$30,000 to turn around low-performing schools.

13. Teach Tennessee received funding to expand the program and train more new teachers.
14. THEC began working on the School Leader Supply and Demand Study.
 - a. The original plans for the study have been changed and the state submitted an amendment to the USDOE outlining the changes in the study. The study will be replaced by a report card on the effectiveness of principal preparation programs.
15. Integration of the Common Core Standards in Teacher Preparation Programs.
 - a. THEC and DOE partnered to develop and provide training in Common Core Standards to pre-service teachers. The training was developed in spring 2011 and is expected to be implemented in 2012. THEC released an RFI in fall 2011 and plan to release an RFP for vendors in spring 2012.
16. Integration of PBS into the Electronic Learning Center (ELC).
 - a. In fall 2011, teachers were given access to PBS content through the ELC online portal. Teachers have access to over 590 teacher resources, and access to live professional development courses will be available soon. DOE is currently working with

PBS to align the content of the resources and courses to Tennessee’s learning objectives and standards.

Accomplishments

- The “First to the Top Act of 2010” became law.
- The new teacher evaluation system (TEAM – Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model) has been adopted by the SBOE and was implemented statewide.
 - The SBOE approved three alternative teacher evaluation models: TIGER developed by the Association of Independent and Municipal Schools (AIMS), Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) developed by Memphis City Schools, and Project Coach developed by the Hamilton County Department of Education.
- The new principal evaluation system is being developed and implemented statewide.
- DOE chose a vendor for the Teacher and Leader Evaluation Data System. The UTeach Program was replicated at UT Chattanooga and University of Memphis.
- Tennessee administered the TELL Survey and published the results and an analysis of the results.
- THEC released the *Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs* in 2010 and 2011.
- HCDE, MCS, and MNPS were each awarded a grant through the Teacher and Principal Residency Grant program.
- Battelle for Kids provided professional development to districts on daily formative assessment practices.
- Seven districts were awarded funding through the Competitive Supplemental Fund.
- Teach Tennessee trained new teachers.
- Four school districts received funding through the IAF and used those funds to develop and implement alternative salary schedules.
- THEC and DOE partnered together to integrate Common Core Standards training into teacher preparation programs.

Additional Information

- For more information on other FTTT initiatives, see reports in this series on “Standards and Assessments,” “STEM,” “Data Systems,” and the “Achievement School District.”
- For information on Great Teachers and Leaders initiatives at the local level, see *Analysis of Scopes of Work Activities: How Select Districts are Using RTTT Funds* published by OREA at <http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/OREA/>.
- For additional information on FTTT Great Teachers and Leaders Initiatives, visit the FTTT website: <http://www.tn.gov/firsttothetop/about.html>. The website contains monthly updates on FTTT initiatives and details of school districts’ plans for implementation of FTTT initiatives. The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) also releases periodic reports on FTTT (<http://www.tnscore.org/>). Local school districts will have information on the implementation of FTTT initiatives locally.

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Hyde Family Foundations

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Background

Joseph Hyde Sr. established the J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation in 1961 with an initial \$1 million investment. In 1992 J.R. Hyde III became president of the Hyde Family Foundation and continued with the tradition of philanthropy by establishing the J.R. Hyde III Family Foundation. Known as the Hyde Family Foundations (the Foundations), both organizations work to improve the quality of life in Memphis, Tennessee. The Foundations' mission is "to empower the people and programs that are making measurable differences in the community, and to provide leadership on public policy issues that will help Memphis become a world-class, 21st century city."

The two foundations share board leadership from various Hyde family members. In 2011, the foundations' assets totaled more than \$120 million. Of that, approximately \$13 million is granted to nonprofit organizations that serve Memphis, Tennessee, or influence policy statewide.

Activities

The Hyde Family Foundations support initiatives that improve public policy, nurture civic creativity, enhance institutional foundations, and provide information to engage the public. The Foundations "are committed to a bold vision for a progressive Memphis." Hyde family board members partner with various community agencies to provide support and funding in the following areas:

- Ensuring children have access to a quality education (transforming education)
- Strengthening neighborhoods in the urban core of Memphis
- Positioning the civic and cultural assets of the city that are unique

Transforming Education—The primary focus in this area is to close the achievement gap through "high-performing schools, great people, and the use of effective public policy." The Foundations' core belief is "ALL students deserve access to a high-quality education. It's a basic civil right."

The Hyde Foundations invest in schools that are designed to support the academic achievement and innovation for underserved children and "prepare [them] for success in college, life and work." The Foundations partner with "district, charter, independent and faith-based schools" to enhance the quality of education through setting high expectations for principals, teachers, and the children served. Funding in this area is specific to:

- professional development and coaching for school leaders and faculty;
- incorporating acceleration strategies for students on or above grade level;
- inventing strategies for students below grade level;
- curricular materials (including technology) used for core academic subjects that would directly impact student achievement.

An organization supported under this model is the Tennessee Charter Schools Association (TCSA), which received a grant for \$150,000 in 2008 and has received a total of \$908,790 in funding from the Foundations.

Great People—The Hyde Foundations invest in initiatives that focus on human capital and allow them to retain quality talent in the field of education. Nationally recognized initiatives toward kindergarten through grade 12 in the Memphis City School system include:

New Leaders for New Schools – In 2009 the Memphis New Leaders for New Schools program produced 56 graduates, and 22 percent of those schools gained 20 percent or more points on student proficiency in math and reading.

Teach for America – The 2007-08 Memphis class participants were the highest performing program in the United States with 22 graduates. As of 2009, the graduates were working full-time in the Memphis City Schools.

Two of the program participants opened charter schools in 2010.

The New Teacher Project – In 2008, funding was awarded to make changes in the hiring practices for teachers in Memphis City Schools. Vacancies in 20 of the lowest performing schools were filled “with candidates having higher GPAs and more candidates with master’s degrees.”

Effective Public Policy – The Foundations aspire to empower citizens to place education at the top of the civic priority list and “expand educational options for families, empower strong leadership, enable school-based decision-making, and ensure that our state’s graduation requirements are aligned to college and work force readiness.” For example, the Foundations supported the work of the Tennessee Diploma Project to enhance graduation requirements.

The Foundations have also collaborated with the Public School Forum of East Tennessee (The Forum), a private sector initiative, which focuses on higher standards, rigorous assessments, and teacher quality. The Forum was founded by Pitt Hyde and Scott Niswonger, president of The Niswonger Foundation. The Hyde Foundations also support the Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), the Tennessee Charter Schools Association (TCSA), and the Tennessee Charter School Incubator.

The Foundations’ goal is to fund and support initiatives that impact educational improvement by:

- finding partners to effect change;
- leading the creation of national best practices in grant-making;
- seeking opportunities to strengthen the philanthropy of others;
- being catalysts for community problem-solving;
- recruiting active, involved public and private partners to shape a new vision for Memphis;
- developing programs with measurable outcomes through collaborative partnerships.

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International Baccalaureate Program

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Background

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program is a nonprofit educational organization created in 1968 [to help] “students aged 3 to 19...develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world.” Its world headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland, with U. S. headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland. As of early 2012, the program has 3,324 schools with 990,000 students in 141 countries. There are 1,307 schools in the United States: 299 in the Primary Years program, 445 in the Middle Years Program and 751 in the Diploma Program. The mission of the foundation is:

....to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging [programs] of international education and rigorous assessment. These [programs] encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

The program emphasizes lifelong learning and understanding about multiple cultures and languages. IB emphasizes learning how to learn, multidisciplinary learning, multicultural learning, and international understanding.

Tennessee has 21 IB schools, each involved in one of the three programs. Two are involved with the Primary Years Program, six with the Middle Years Program, ten with the Diploma Program, and three with both the Middle and Diploma programs. (See Exhibit 1.) All but one of the participating Tennessee schools are public schools.

Activities

Key activities of the IB program include:

- Development of curriculum
- Assessment of students
- Training and professional development of teachers
- Authorization and evaluation of schools

The IB Primary Years Program has six “transdisciplinary themes”:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organize ourselves
- Sharing the planet

The key themes of the middle years program are:

- Intercultural awareness
- Holistic learning
- Communication.

The key themes of the Diploma Program:

- Study six subjects chosen from the six subject groups
- Complete an extended essay
- Follow a theory of knowledge course (TOK)
- Participate in creativity, action, service (CAS).

Exhibit 1: International Baccalaureate Programs in Tennessee

	LEA	Primary Years Program	Middle Years Program	Diploma Program
Lausanne Collegiate School (Private)	N/A			X
Ridgeway High School	Memphis City Schools			X
Bellevue Middle School	Metro Nashville Public Schools		X	
Brick Church Middle School	Metro Nashville Public Schools		X	
Goodlettsville Middle School	Metro Nashville Public Schools		X	
Hillsboro Comprehensive High School	Metro Nashville Public Schools			X
Hillwood High School	Metro Nashville Public Schools			X
Hunters Lane Comprehensive High School	Metro Nashville Public Schools			X
J.T. Moore Middle School	Metro Nashville Public Schools		X	
Julia Green Elementary School	Metro Nashville Public Schools	X		
Neely's Bend Middle School	Metro Nashville Public Schools		X	
West End Middle School	Metro Nashville Public Schools		X	
West High School	Knoxville City Schools			X
Brown International Academy	Hamilton County Schools	X		
Signal Mountain Middle / High School	Hamilton County Schools		X	X
Franklin High School	Williamson County Schools			X
Oakland High School	Rutherford County Schools			X
Germantown High School	Shelby County Schools			X
Science Hill High School	Johnson City Schools			X
Cookeville High School	Putnam County Schools			X
Bolton High School	Shelby County Schools			X
Totals		2	9	12

Source: International Baccalaureate, "Find a School," <http://www.ibo.org>.

Niswonger Foundation

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Background

The Niswonger Foundation was established in 2001 by Greeneville businessman and philanthropist Scott Niswonger, who continues to serve as president of the foundation. The mission of the foundation is “to create opportunities for individual and community growth through education.” Mr. Niswonger established the foundation to address the educational needs he observed in schools in rural northeast Tennessee. He believes that “given the proper instruction, low-income students can learn at the same level as their middle-income, suburban counterparts.”

“The foundation is not a traditional grant-making foundation, but an “operating” foundation with its own programs and projects.” The staff works with schools and families to “explore the key challenges and identify what will work best to address a school’s most pressing needs.”

Activities

Key activities of the Niswonger Foundation include:

- School Partnerships
- Scholarship and Leadership Training Program
- Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium
- Regional and Statewide Initiatives and Partnerships
- Grants

School Partnerships

The foundation works with and funds identified program needs in northeast Tennessee schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The foundation partners with schools or LEAs to assess needs and provide resources and expertise tailored to particular schools and communities. The foundation has funded more than \$10 million to over 30 partnership projects between 2001 and 2011. The partnerships are generally multi-year commitments to give schools “enough time and support to absorb and grow” the changes made.”

Exhibit 1 lists the partnership projects. A primary focus of the partnerships has been to provide on-going embedded professional development for teachers. Another focus has been to use technology to enhance the curriculum. The projects have varied widely including reading initiatives, math and science curriculum, instrumental music, college and career counseling, and access to more rigorous high school courses through distance and on-line learning. Projects have included students from pre-kindergarten through high school and in a few instances, adults.

Accomplishments include increased reading and math assessment scores in elementary and middle schools, improvement in schools’ grades on the State Report Card, and increased graduation rates in high schools.

Scholarship and Leadership Training Program

The Niswonger Foundation has selected between four and eleven area high school students with leadership potential each year since 2002 to receive full college expenses, above any other scholarships received, to the college or university of their choice. The scholars agree to return to work in northeast Tennessee within seven years of completing college, for the number of years the foundation funded their education. The program includes training sessions on leadership, management, service, and ethics; internships; and service-learning projects throughout the college years.

As of May 2011, the Niswonger Foundation has provided \$3.6 million in support for 54 scholars, 22 current scholars, and 32 alumni scholars. Five new scholars will enroll in higher education institutions in fall 2011.

Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium

The Niswonger Foundation is partnering with 15 LEAs in northeast Tennessee to establish the Northeast Tennessee College and Career Ready Consortium. This project received funding in August 2010 through a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) Grant. The grant provides \$21 million over five

Exhibit 1: Niswonger Foundation School Partnership Project, 2001 – 2011

School System	Project Name	School Level
2001-02		
Greene County	Instrumental Music Program	High and Middle School
Johnson County	Vocational Learning Laboratory	High School
Cocke County-Grassy Fork School	Curriculum Enhancement: reading, language arts, math, and science	Elementary School
Carter County	Technology Improvement Plan	High School
Greeneville City	Spanish Language Instruction	Elementary School
Unicoi County	Performance audit and Planning Retreat	System
2002-03		
Newport City Schools	Science Instruction	Elementary and Middle School
Hancock County	Extended learning in reading and writing	Elementary School
2003-04		
Hamblen County	International Center	All students and families
Carter County	Math Instruction	High and Elementary School
Unicoi County	Curriculum review, professional development, and technology upgrade	Elementary
2004-05		
Hawkins County	Credit Recovery Program	High School
Rogersville City	Pre-K program	PK
Bristol City	On-line high school courses development	High School
2006-07		
Cocke County	Professional Development Initiative	Elementary
Greene County	Credit Recovery Program and Tutoring	High School
Greene County	Reading Initiative and adult education	Elementary and Adult
Greene County	Expanded band programs	High and Middle School
Greene County	Career Guidance Program	High School
Johnson County	Virtual High School	High School
Johnson County	Middle School Improvement Project and Strategic Plan	Middle School
2007-08		
Greeneville City	Virtual Learning – Foreign Language	High School
Greeneville City	After-school Program	Elementary
Hancock County	Science and reading/language arts Software	Middle School
Hawkins County	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	High, Middle, and Elementary School
Jefferson County	Literacy Program	Middle and High School
2008-09		
Elizabethton City	Technology Enhancement	High School
Washington County	Pre-K Program	PK
2009-10		
Hancock County	Math and Science Improvement	High School
2010-11		
Greene County	Distance Learning – Latin	High School

Source: Niswonger Foundation, “2001-2011: A Decade of Distinction,” “Transforming Lives: 2007-2008 Annual Report,” “Charter the Course: 2008-2009 Annual Report.

years, including \$17.7 million in federal funds matched by \$3.6 million from philanthropic funds raised by the Niswonger Foundation in partnership with the Gates Foundation, the Rural School and Community Trust Fund, and the JP Morgan Foundation.

The goals of the consortium include:

- 1) ensuring that all students, especially students in under-represented populations, graduate from high school prepared for college and career; and
- 2) improving the likelihood that students successfully complete college.

Specific activities funded by the grant include:

- creating a regional coordinating body (Consortium) to analyze course supply and demand in the region and determine course needs. Primary areas of focus include: (1) science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); (2) advanced career and technical education (CTE) courses; and (3) upper-level foreign language courses.
- scaling up local promising practices to offer more rigorous courses, including distance and on-line learning, Advanced Placement, and dual enrollment.
- providing additional career and college counseling resources to every student in the region including new resources on college preparedness, access, and application processes via college counselors.

The grant project is estimated to benefit about 26,100 students in 29 high schools in northeast Tennessee.

Regional and Statewide Initiatives and Partnerships

The Niswonger Foundation has provided funding for several regional and statewide initiatives. These include several partnerships to provide professional development for teachers and educational administrators and leaders in Tennessee. Another area of focus has been to develop and expand electronic learning across Tennessee. The Niswonger Foundation is also a key player in other education reform efforts in Tennessee. Partnerships and initiatives include:

Educators Professional Development

- [Tennessee Department of Education \(TDOE\)](#)—Tennessee Teacher of the Year: monetary awards to recognize the profession’s best and brightest teachers
- [Tennessee School Boards Association and Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents](#)—Prospective Superintendents Academy
- [Tennessee School Boards Association](#)—Online courses for school board members
- [Tennessee Principals Association and TDOE](#)—Online training modules for principals
- [University of Tennessee](#)—Leadership Preparation Academy: postgraduate program for school administrators
- [East Tennessee State University](#)—Reaching for Excellence in Math Partnership: professional development for grade 4–9 math teachers in targeted districts on advanced math content and standards-based teaching strategies
- [Tusculum College](#)—Early Childhood Special Education Program, to address the region’s needs for teachers certified in early childhood special education, develop community partnerships with agencies that deliver early childhood services, and initiate continuing education opportunities for the community
- [School Success Symposium](#)—conference to showcase the best educational practices in the northeast region

Electronic Learning Initiatives

- [Tennessee State Board of Education](#)—eLearning Initiative. The foundation is “piloting a statewide program to make available high quality, affordable eLearning opportunities for students. eLearning Centers will be developed in each of the three grand divisions of the state.” Among the goals are “to raise graduation rates and add rigor and relevance to the high school curriculum.”

- Regional Distance Learning—\$450,000 toward match for a \$1 million United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant to help Carter, Cocke, Greene, Hawkins, Johnson, and Unicoi Counties create distance learning labs.

Support of other Education Reform Efforts

- Foundation staff serves on the board, and the foundation is a philanthropic supporter of, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE).

Grants

Direct grants make up less than 10 percent of the foundation budget. Grants have funded:

- dictionaries to more than 8,000 area 3rd grade students
- field trips for area students
- after school tutoring for at-risk students
- performing arts opportunities including symphony performances and art museum visits

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No Child Left Behind

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Background

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the 2001 federal legislation that reauthorized and amended the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Signed into law by President George Bush in 2002, the act's four key principles are accountability, flexibility and local control, parental choice, and research-based practices. It seeks to improve academic achievement for all students, but focuses special attention on students in struggling schools.

The new law was characterized as "a major shift in thinking about the role of the federal government in public education." Tennessee school principals were told:

The new law drastically changes your spending priorities and operating procedures. The No Child Left Behind Act has new requirements for accountability, highly qualified staff, parental choice, student support, and staff development. It is the most demanding and comprehensive legislation enacted to this date.

NCLB consists of Titles I through X. Title I – Improving Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged – is by itself the largest federal program for elementary and secondary education. Title I provides formula grants to school districts, which then allocate most of these funds to individual schools based on their number of poor children. Schools not eligible for school-wide programs must use Title I funds to provide targeted services for low-achieving students. Programs become school-wide when 40 percent or more of students in the school are poor. Other titles in the law address preparing, training, and recruiting high-quality teachers and principals (Title II); language instruction for limited English proficient and immigrant students (Title III); safe and drug-free schools (Title IV); and promoting informed parental choice and innovative programs (Title V).

Some of the key goals of NCLB are:

- All students will, at a minimum, obtain proficiency or better in reading and mathematics by the 2013-14 school year.
- All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English.
- All teachers will be highly qualified by the 2005–2006 school year.
- All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free and conducive to learning.
- All students will graduate from high school.

Requirements

Accountability

In 2005-06, states were required to begin testing students annually in math and reading/language arts in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school. In 2007-08, states were required to begin three science assessments between grades 3-12. Test data is to be compiled by demographic subgroups (race, ethnicity, poverty level, disability status, and English proficiency) to ensure that "no child is left behind."

Annual school report cards available to the public are to provide comparative data by school and district. States must develop a single, statewide accountability system that includes all schools and students. States select their own tests, determine scores deemed "proficient," and set yearly target goals, but the law requires 100 percent of students in all states to achieve proficiency by 2014. Schools and districts must show progress in reaching their annual targets – adequate yearly progress, or AYP – for student populations as a whole, and also for each student subgroup. While reading and math achievement levels are the primary indicators, high schools must also show progress on graduation rates and elementary schools must report one other indicator selected by the state. Tennessee selected attendance for its other elementary school indicator.

Schools/districts that do not make adequate yearly progress on reading and math assessments are

targeted for assistance, then subject to corrective action and restructuring. State education departments provide the assistance and implement the corrective actions mandated by NCLB, and may take additional steps. Sanctions start when schools or districts do not meet AYP for two consecutive years, and become increasingly severe, including:

- public identification that school is failing,
- required review and revision of the School Improvement Plan,
- required public school choice,
- required budget set-asides for supplemental services (such as tutoring, remediation, other educational interventions specifically designed to increase student academic achievement),
- required outside technical assistance,
- replacement or reassignment of staff,
- reorganization of management structure,
- commissioner control of financial and personnel resources, and
- state takeover.

The law includes a “Safe Harbor” provision that allows a school to avoid sanctions when one or more student subgroups fail to meet adequate yearly progress benchmarks, but still show significant improvement, as long as the school scores well overall.

To help states meet their student achievement goals, the law requires each state to ensure that its teachers are highly qualified to teach their subjects. Initiatives and strategies that are considered key to raising student achievement levels received increased federal funding in the NCLB reauthorization, including extended learning time offered through before- and after-school programs and early reading programs, focusing on grades K-3. Additional funding was also targeted to schools with higher proportions of poor students.

Each state is to have a sample of 4th and 8th graders participate in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP – sometimes known as the Nation’s Report Card) to help the Department of Education track the results of state assessments by comparing student achievement among states. In 2008, revisions were made to require states to report their NAEP scores on their state report cards.

Flexibility and Local Control

In exchange for greater accountability for results, states and school districts have “unprecedented flexibility” in how they use federal education funds. States and districts may transfer up to 50 percent of federal formula grant funds among four programs or to their Title I program. For example, NCLB put increased focus on teacher quality through a number of provisions. To allow local control of funding to mirror that focus, funding from older programs was consolidated into one flexible program that can be used for a variety of teacher quality initiatives, such as hiring more teachers to reduce class sizes, providing professional development, and offering incentives to retain highly qualified teachers.

Enhanced Parental Choice

Students in schools identified as failing for two consecutive years must be given the option to transfer to a better school within their district, including any charter school. Transportation for students exercising school choice must be provided at the district’s expense. In schools that fail to meet standards for three years, students from low-income families become eligible to receive tutoring, summer school, or after-school programs, paid for from school set-aside funds. Parents have to be notified when conditions at their school make students eligible for these options. The parental choice options are linked to the accountability factors. Because report card data on schools must be available, parents can compare their children’s school to others on achievement levels, adequate yearly progress, graduation rates, and percentage of classes not taught by highly qualified teachers. In order to provide parents with more school choices, NCLB has provided start-up funds and other financing to encourage development of more charter schools.

Research-based Practices

NCLB emphasizes that states, districts, and schools should look to programs and practices that have been proven effective through research and testing. Specific provisions in the law direct educators to focus on early reading proficiency, teacher quality, and school choice, especially for students in low-performing schools and districts, as ways to improve student achievement.

Standards Revision and Pilot Programs

NCLB allows states to choose their own assessments and achievement standards. As a result, state benchmarks for proficiency can vary significantly. Setting low proficiency benchmarks helps states more easily meet AYP targets, but places students at a disadvantage when competing for college admissions and employment with students educated in states with more rigorous standards.

Tennessee raises standards

In order to bring its academic standards and assessments more in line with national measures, Tennessee joined the American Diploma Project network with 30 other states in 2007. The State Board of Education adopted new, more rigorous curriculum standards for science, language arts, and math for grades K-12 in 2007 and 2008 and new graduation requirements for freshmen starting high school in 2009-10. Adoption of the Tennessee Diploma Project standards required revision of state achievement tests (TCAP) so student performance could be measured against the new standards.

The state adopted a four-level proficiency scale – advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic – and reset the cut-off scores needed to achieve those levels to better reflect national standards. (Before the revisions, for example, the national NAEP scores showed 28 percent of Tennessee 8th graders as proficient in reading, while the state TCAP scores showed more than 90 percent to be proficient.) Scores dropped significantly in 2010, the first year students were tested under the new standards. Education officials explain that the new scores are meaningful indicators of how Tennessee students are performing compared to students in other states.

Building on the foundation of the Tennessee Diploma Project standards, Tennessee has adopted the Common Core State Standards, along with some 40 other states. Tennessee has begun implementing these standards in grades K-2 during the 2011-12 school year. Although there may be additional shifts in students' achievement scores as the Common Core Standards are implemented, education officials do not expect it to be a significant problem because of the

state's previous work to reset proficiency benchmarks that align with national measures, such as NAEP and the high school ACT test.

Impact on NCLB requirements

Tennessee received a waiver in August 2010 of NCLB deadlines for required determination and reporting of schools' adequate yearly progress because the state was still in the process of setting its new achievement measures. For NCLB, Tennessee's new achievement standards meant re-setting its AYP baseline and annual targets, although the state still had to plan to meet the 100 percent proficiency goal for all students by 2013-14. The AYP determinations from the 2010 test results were used to determine the classification of schools/districts as high priority (failing), target, or in good standing for the following school year. Although the state had anticipated a large number of schools in the high priority category due to the new measures, schools made greater progress than expected.

Pilot program

In 2005-06, Tennessee was one of the first states to receive U.S. Department of Education approval for its Growth Model Pilot Program. This program allows the state to integrate its data projecting expected student growth with the NCLB accountability system. In the national discussion regarding the reauthorization of ESEA, many educators have advocated allowing all schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress either by proficiency scores or by showing improvement (growth from a baseline rather than hitting specified achievement levels).

Actions/Outcomes

Concerns

Over the years since NCLB was passed, concerns have grown over the goal of having 100 percent of school children achieve proficiency in math and reading by 2014. As schools, districts, and states struggle to achieve annual yearly progress targets, a growing number of schools and districts are labeled as failing, often despite making progress. A national study found that 48 percent of public schools did not make AYP, based on students' test results from 2010-11, ranging from 11 percent in Wisconsin to 89 percent in Florida. Because AYP targets, test content, and scoring can vary significantly among states, those with higher

percentages of failing schools cannot be assumed to have weaker educational systems. In Tennessee, the Commissioner of Education reported that almost half the state’s schools were labeled failing in 2011, and estimated that roughly 80 percent would be labeled failing the following year. See Exhibit 1.

No Child Left Behind has been subject to criticism:

- for basing school assessments on only one measure (student achievement tests),
- for narrowing of school curricula (teaching to the test),
- for producing unintended consequences of lowered state academic standards and achievement levels for “proficiency,”
- for over-emphasizing school sanctions rather than supports, and
- for relying on state-level achievement tests at the expense of local assessments and broader measures based on student growth and high-order learning.

Other criticisms are that NCLB has overemphasized math and reading test scores to the detriment of other important subjects such as history, the arts, and foreign language, and that the increase in federal control of education has come at the expense of innovation at the local and state levels.

Achievements

In 2008, NCLB funding was \$24.4 billion, a 40 percent increase over 2001 levels. Despite other concerns, most stakeholders acknowledge the value of setting high goals for all children’s educational achievement, and especially for those subgroups of students who have struggled in the past. The increased focus on achievement gaps among student population groups and persistently low-performing schools has generally been considered a valuable result. Public reporting of school data that allows parents to make more informed

decisions about school choices has also been cited as a positive outcome of the law.

Nationally, student test scores have been rising and achievement gaps have been narrowing. In 2006, four years after NCLB was passed, nearly three-fourths of states saw increased test scores. In 2009, 73 percent of all students achieved proficiency on state reading assessments and 72 percent on state math assessments. Although proficiency rates for minority, disabled, low-income, and English language learner sub-groups were all lower than rates for all students, the subgroups also showed growth in proficiency rates. As noted previously, for purposes of meeting NCLB’s adequate yearly progress goals, states use their own assessments and scoring scales to measure proficiency.

Results of the NAEP test, which uses the same test and scoring scale for all students taking the tests, showed fourth-graders’ reading levels of proficient or above rose from 29 percent to 32 percent (2000 – 2007), and math levels rose from 24 percent to 39 percent (2000 – 2007). NAEP results also showed increases for minority students. Fourth grade reading scores for African Americans have increased six points, and for Hispanics, five points, from 2002, when NCLB was implemented, to 2009. Eighth grade gains have been smaller but still noticeable. Gains have been larger for math scores (e.g., a nine point increase for African Americans in 8th grade). Other analyses do not attribute these gains to NCLB and have found that NAEP achievement levels increased faster in the years before NCLB was implemented.

The number of charter schools increased to almost 5,000 by 2010 and the percentage of core academic classes taught by highly-qualified teachers reached 96 percent in 2009.

Exhibit 1: Percentage of Tennessee public schools not meeting AYP

Tennessee	2008	2009	2010	2011
High Priority (not met AYP 2+ yrs)	8%	9%	11%	17%
Target (not met AYP 1 yr.)	11%	12%	13%	32%
Total	19%	21%	24%	49%

Source: Tennessee Department of Education.

The Future

Since 2007, Congress has made several attempts to rewrite No Child Left Behind, but none have yet reached a final vote. Suggestions for what Congress should change in the law have come from numerous groups and sources.

Recommendations for Changes to NCLB

In 2007, the Education Commission of the States compiled a database from 15 organizations that had released reauthorization recommendations. Among its findings was that the NCLB provision for adequate yearly progress received more recommendations than any other issue. "All organizations proposed the use of 'growth models' to calculate AYP, a method which would recognize and reward student and school progress toward meeting annual performance targets. Currently, schools either 'hit or miss' AYP targets, and only receive credit for student gains under the somewhat confusing Safe Harbor provision." Most organizations also called for greater flexibility for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

Changes were also proposed for the consequences or sanctions for failing schools. The most common proposal was to allow states and districts to target assistance and intervention to the highest need schools and students, rather than to all those that missed adequate yearly progress goals.

The Obama Administration released its "Blueprint for Reauthorization" in March 2010. It called for continuing core policies of disaggregation of data to focus on improving performance for all groups of students, the focus on equity, and reform and accountability based on standards. The blueprint included the following recommendations for change:

1. Replace inadequate standards with college and career ready standards.
2. Replace the focus on proficiency with measurements of student growth and progress.
3. Replace penalties with rewards for high-poverty schools, districts, and states showing

progress.

4. Replace focus on high-stakes tests with better assessments, look beyond tests to attendance, conditions for learning, additional subjects, and curriculum.
5. Replace mandated supplemental services and school choice with more local flexibility around how best to serve schools.

Other proposed changes included targeting a more limited number of schools for significant intervention, providing investment in low-performing schools, holding every level of the system (not just the school) responsible for improvement, increasing focus on teacher working conditions, planning and collaboration, and professional development, preparing better school leaders (principals), making accountability about learning environment rather than just test scores, and promoting funding equity.

The U.S. Department of Education's strategic plan indicates it will work with Congress during the reauthorization of NCLB to target greater resources to high-need, high-poverty high schools. The plan also states that the department will support states in improving data systems so that students who need help are identified early and that its Institute of Education Sciences will continue working to increase the supply of high-quality relevant research to allow schools and districts to make more informed and effective decisions.

Recent Congressional Action

Three bills dealing with parts of ESEA reauthorization have passed the House Education and Workforce Committee. One has passed the full House: the "Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act" passed the full House on September 13, 2011. The bill supports expansion of the charter schools program while adding quality control provisions. The two other bills that have passed out of committee address (1) elimination of more than 40 programs identified as duplicative or ineffective, and (2) flexibility for school districts using federal funds allocated for low-income students. The House Education and Workforce Committee released the last two parts of its ESEA reauthorization legislation in January 2012, focusing on teachers and accountability measures.

These bills, considered discussion drafts subject to change, include provisions to:

- eliminate adequate yearly progress goals, tutoring and school choice options for parents, and requirements for teachers to be highly qualified,
- reduce the federal role in intervening in low-performing schools,
- require teacher evaluations to be based partly on student outcomes and used in personnel decisions, and
- allow greater flexibility for funds previously earmarked for specific student populations.

In the Senate, a bill dealing with the complete ESEA reauthorization was passed by the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on October 20, 2011. A hearing on the bill was held in November 2011, but as of then the bill had not yet been scheduled for a Senate floor vote.

Department of Education Waivers

Due in part to the long wait for Congressional reauthorization of NCLB, the U.S. Department of Education announced in September 2011 that states could apply for waivers of numerous NCLB requirements. To be considered for waivers, states must commit to a number of alternative actions:

- adopt college and career ready standards and tie state tests to them;
- establish differentiated accountability that

- focuses on both proficiency levels and achievement gaps and that identifies the five percent best performing schools and the 15 percent most troubled schools;
- create guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation based partly on student performance and use them for personnel decisions; and
- reduce school district reporting requirements of information that has little or no impact on student outcomes.

States approved for waivers would be released from the 2014 deadline requiring 100 percent of students to achieve proficiency and would be allowed to set their own student achievement goals and design their own interventions for schools that were considered failing under AYP. NCLB requirements for failing schools to offer public school choice and supplemental educational services and to be subject to other corrective action and restructuring, would be replaced by state-prescribed interventions. The federal waiver would also allow states and districts to transfer more federal monies among various educational programs and provide more flexibility for using certain federal funds in low-performing schools.

Tennessee submitted its formal waiver application on November 14, 2011. Key aspects of the state’s waiver proposal include a new accountability system based on growth in student proficiency levels of three to five

Exhibit 2: Comparison of selected indicators from NCLB and First to the Top

Indicator	2009-10 Baseline	2013-14 NCLB Target	2014-15 FTTT Target
3rd grade reading/language arts (TCAP, % proficient or advanced)	42%	100%	60%
3rd grade mathematics (TCAP, % proficient or advanced)	48%	100%	64%
7rd grade reading/language arts (TCAP, % proficient or advanced)	43%	100%	57%
7rd grade mathematics (TCAP, % proficient or advanced)	29%	100%	51%
High school graduation (4-year rate, Longitudinal cohort definition)	~83%	90%	90%

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, First to the Top Goals presented on website.

percent a year. The state believes these are challenging but achievable goals, and they are consistent with its First to the Top goals. (See Exhibit 2). The state has also proposed to reduce achievement gaps between sub-groups of students (racial minorities, economically disadvantaged, disabled, limited English proficient) by about six percent a year. Instead of the pass/fail system under AYP, the state is proposing to assess progress not only by whether schools and districts achieved or missed their targets, but also by whether they made improvements. The state's interventions will focus on setting appropriate goals, reporting progress to the public, and supporting local school districts as they manage their schools.

In addition, the waiver proposal includes the federal requirements to identify "reward," "priority," and "focus" schools. For reward schools, Tennessee will annually identify the top five percent of all schools in proficiency levels and the top five percent in student growth.

Priority schools will be identified every three years as those in the bottom five percent of proficiency, and focus schools will be the ten percent of schools with the largest achievement gaps among subgroups. Reward schools will be recognized publicly, receive financial rewards, and have opportunities to share best practices. Focus schools will be required to submit a plan to the state on how they will address achievement gaps and will be able to compete for intervention grants. Priority schools may be placed in the state's Achievement School District, or in a turnaround status under a local innovation zone or school improvement grant plan, or under a local district improvement process.

The U.S. Department of Education is expected to approve the first round of waiver applications at the end of 2011 or early in 2012. If approved, Tennessee will need to seek changes in state law to reflect the proposed accountability system in the waiver.

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State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE)

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Background

The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based at Vanderbilt University's John Seigenthaler First Amendment Center in Nashville, Tennessee. Founded by former U.S. Senator Bill Frist in 2008, SCORE's mission is to ensure that every child graduates high school prepared for college or a career and that "Tennessee is the fastest improving state in the country on the key student outcomes that will lead to college and career preparedness." SCORE targets K-12 education reform through encouraging sound public education policy decisions at state and local government levels.

SCORE is governed by a 14-member board of directors, chaired by Dr. Frist and comprised of Tennessee philanthropic and business leaders committed to public education. The organization's work is guided by a 29-member steering committee comprised of education stakeholders across the state. In April 2011, Jamie Woodson, an education leader and former Speaker Pro Tempore of the Tennessee State Senate, was named President and Chief Executive Officer of SCORE.

SCORE's Involvement in Tennessee

SCORE serves as a resource for information on state-level education reform. The organization assists in monitoring and supporting implementation of Race to the Top in Tennessee. SCORE also issues research reports, including Annual Reports on the State of Education in Tennessee. The organization is counseled by national advisors who are experts in American education policy.

SCORE also publishes a blog known as "The SCORE Sheet" which serves as "an online conversation on public education reform in Tennessee." The blog is collaborative and features a variety of contributors, including parents, teachers, policymakers, community groups, and members of SCORE's staff.

Programs and Activities

Notable SCORE programs and activities include the "Expect More, Achieve More" campaign to build support for the higher academic standards adopted by Tennessee after joining the American Diploma Project. The campaign launched in the fall of 2010 and is led by a coalition of more than 30 statewide business and education organizations.

SCORE has also launched a parental outreach website at www.expectmoretn.org, designed to outline steps parents can take if their children are struggling with low test scores. The site is linked to 81 Tennessee school districts, as well as the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Business Roundtable, local chambers of commerce, and other organizations.

SCORE distributed 330,000 brochures over two months to explain the importance of higher academic standards to parents across the state. In partnership with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's GEAR UP program, SCORE distributed an additional 150,000 brochures.

Public service announcements are also a part of SCORE's methodology for emphasizing education. SCORE created public service announcements emphasizing the importance of education to air on radio and TV stations across Tennessee. The first PSA was a partnership with the Public School Forum of Knoxville and featured Tennessee Women's basketball coach Pat Summit. SCORE also partnered with the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters to air the TV and radio announcements across the state.

SCORE also awards an annual prize to schools and school districts for "dramatically improving student achievement in spite of the challenges they face." Schools receive \$10,000 and districts, \$25,000. Following the awards, SCORE provides videos and case studies of all award finalists.

In January 2012, SCORE announced that, at the request of Governor Haslam, it will lead an independent statewide listening and feedback process on the state's new teacher evaluation system. SCORE plans to host eight regional roundtables open to the public to gather feedback, and will collect information from educators and administrators through an online survey by March 1.

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The Tennessee Charter School Incubator

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Background

The Tennessee Charter School Incubator (TCSI), a nonprofit organization originally named the Center for Charter School Excellence in Tennessee, was created in 2009. The TCSI was established as an initiative of the mayor's office in Nashville "to support and fund the development of high-performing public charter schools in Metro-Nashville." The goal of TCSI is to implement and support high quality charter schools in Tennessee. Since it was launched, the TCSI has grown to become a statewide organization. Greg Thompson is the Chief Executive Officer of TCSI and Justin Testerman is the Chief Operating Officer. The TCSI is overseen by a seven-member board and has partnered with organizations such as Building Excellent Schools, 4.0 Schools, the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF), and the Tennessee Charter School Association (TCSA).

TCSI is primarily funded through grants from private foundations (for example, the Hyde Foundations and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), the federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, and Race to the Top (RTTT).

Activities

The core belief of TCSI is that charter schools are one of the best mechanisms to close the achievement gap between low-income students and students with a higher socioeconomic status (SES) and between minority students (Hispanic and African-American) and Caucasian students. The main goal of TCSI is to close the achievement gap by creating new high-performing charter schools in Tennessee and providing support to the schools. (See Exhibit 1.) The TCSI supports the development of new charter schools by:

- **creating a fellowship program** for educational leaders who want to open high-performing charter schools in Tennessee. TCSI Fellows are given resources, guidance, and support to open charter schools in Nashville and Memphis. Two TCSI fellows opened charter schools in the 2011-12 school year.
- **building partnerships with organizations** to train charter school leaders (4.0 schools and Building Excellent Schools); and to recruit and train high-quality staff for charter schools. Training focuses on how to develop and govern a high-achieving, urban, college-preparatory charter school. TCSI is also working with the TCSA, the Tennessee Department of Education, Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, and SCORE to coordinate efforts and prevent duplicative practices/activities.
- **developing collaborative relationships with Metro-Nashville Public Schools and Memphis City Schools** to support charter schools and enhance collaboration between charter schools and school districts.
- **working with new school leaders to help launch charter schools in Memphis and Nashville** by assisting with recruitment and training of talented professionals, setting up the charter school governing board, training board members, procuring facilities for the school, financing facilities, and providing "capacity-building services and funding to these new schools in their early operating years" (e.g. school reviews, funded site-visits to other high-performing charter schools, data-driven instruction coaching, and small- to medium-sized operating grants). TCSI is currently incubating several new charter schools – two new charter schools opened in Nashville in 2011-12 and one new charter school is scheduled to open in Memphis in 2012-13.
- **working with existing high-performing charter schools in Memphis and Nashville** by offering "school reviews" free of charge (where qualified professionals evaluate the school, offer ideas for improvement, and provide additional resources to improve areas

of weakness and to enhance areas of strength) and a variety of additional services, support, and resources.

- **working with existing charter schools in Memphis and Nashville that are not high-performing to improve their performance and quality** by offering schools capacity building services (such as those described previously) and free “school reviews.”
- **working with the Tennessee General Assembly and the TCSA to ensure that legislation is passed that promotes high-quality charter schools.**

The TCSI seeks to build infrastructure to help schools access additional resources and become more efficient and effective in the areas of staff recruitment, finances, facilities, and management of charter schools.

TCSI plans to partner with the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF) to open and support an additional 20 new charter schools in Nashville and Memphis by 2015. The CSGF is a “nonprofit venture capital fund” that provides “financing, business planning support, coaching and other resources” to charter schools that target underserved students (minority and low income students) and charter management organizations (CMOs) that operate these types of schools. The CSGF will develop the Charter School Growth Fund of

Tennessee to “invest in highperforming current charter organizations and/or high–performing new schools launched by the Tennessee Charter School Incubator that are seeking to grow by becoming a CMO.”

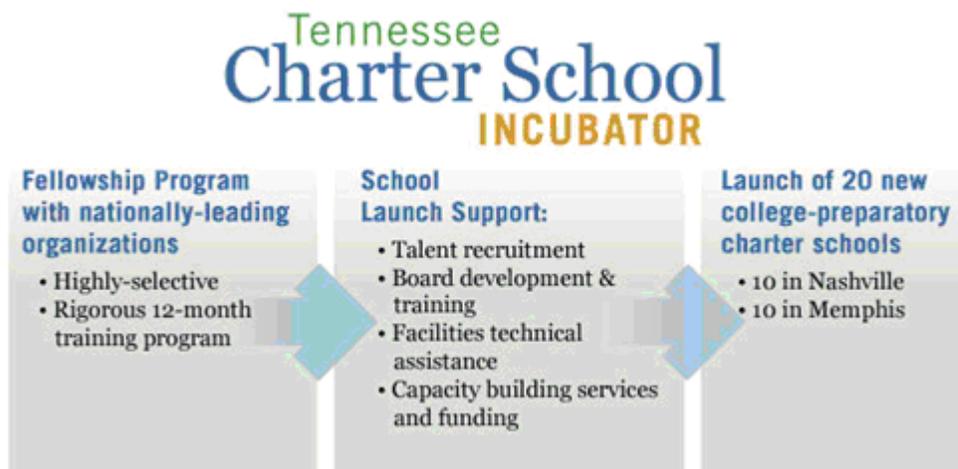
TCSI’s activities are currently funded by Race to the Top (RTTT) (\$10 million), funding from the Wallace Foundation (\$6 million), and funding from other state sources (\$11.2 million). The organization hopes to raise an additional \$2.8 million. TCSI plans to contribute \$15 million towards the creation and growth of new charter schools and \$15 million towards the development of CMOs in Tennessee.

Expected Outcomes

By supporting the creation and growth of new charter schools and CMOs, TCSI in partnership with CSGF seeks to:

- provide an outstanding education for up to 20,000 students in Tennessee every year, focused on serving low income students currently in the poorest performing schools in these cities;
- quintuple charter market share in Nashville and more than double it in Memphis;
- create a high performing, scalable and sustainable set of charter schools that will change the expectations of what is possible for all students in both cities.

Exhibit 1: The TCSI Plan of Action



Source: Tennessee Charter School Incubator, “About the Incubator – What we do,” <http://www.charterexcellence.org> (accessed Jul. 18, 2011).

TCSI is currently developing student achievement benchmarks to gauge incubator schools' performance relative to their district counterparts.

Education, Hyde Foundation, charter school operators, school district personnel, and the Tennessee Charter Schools Association, to inform stakeholders from other states about charter schools in Tennessee and to recruit highly-qualified professionals to work at charter schools in Tennessee.

Achievements

- Incubated two new charter schools, Nashville Prep and Liberty Collegiate Academy, which opened in Nashville in the 2011-12 school year.
- Hosted a booth at the 2011 National Charter School Conference, in partnership with volunteers from the Tennessee Department of

TCSI has created a set of criteria to assess the quality of the charter schools it supports (See Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: TCSI-defined Qualities of a High Quality Charter School

School Mission and Goals	
Criteria	Evidence
Relentless commitment to closing the achievement gap	The school is clear in its stated goals of preparing its students for college success and being competitive in the global economy. Academic results should demonstrate that students (particularly students from low-income backgrounds and students of color) are achieving at levels similar to other socioeconomic and demographic groups – or are making significant progress toward doing so.
Strong focus on preparing all students for college acceptance and completion	The school is clear in its stated goals of preparing its students for college success. The school will also have a college-preparatory curriculum in place (grade-appropriate).
School Culture	
Criteria	Evidence
Highly structured learning environment is present	Students are consistently on-task, and teachers and staff maximize learning time.
A performance-driven culture exists with school leaders, teachers and staff effectively using data to make instructional and operational decisions	There is a clear process setting goals, measuring performance, and using data to drive academic achievement and operational decisions.
School Leaders and Teachers	
Criteria	Evidence
Highly capable school leaders and teachers who can drive dramatic student gains are in place	The school's leaders and teachers have demonstrated an ability to achieve exceptional academic results (as evidenced through interim assessments, state tests or nationally norm-referenced assessments).
Strong focus on recruiting and retaining talent	There is a well-thought-out strategy and process for recruiting high-caliber leaders and teachers to the school. The school has a robust plan for coaching and professional development.

Student Achievement	
Criteria	Evidence
School has a record of academic achievement	<p>The school has achieved high student achievement growth rates (as measured by TVAAS scores, growth in the percentage of students reaching proficiency and advanced levels on state tests, and growth in percentile rankings on nationally norm-referenced tests).</p> <p>The school's students are outperforming those in neighboring schools and performing at a level that exceeds district and statewide averages.</p>
Financial and Operational Systems	
Criteria	Evidence
School has sound financial and operational systems and processes in place	<p>The school consistently meets compliance requirements and deadlines set by the authorizer and the state (annual reports, school improvement plans, financial statements, audit, calendar, student attendance).</p> <p>The school effectively manages its budget and cash flow and has a plan for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>The school effectively manages operations (food, transportation, facilities, etc.) such that learning time is maximized.</p>
Governance	
Criteria	Evidence
School has a well-functioning board	<p>The board comprises members who represent a diverse set of skills, which will enable the school to be successful.</p> <p>The board is actively engaged in the school, including participating in fundraising efforts to help create sustainability for the school.</p>

Source: Tennessee Charter School Incubator, "About the Incubator – What we believe," <http://www.charterexcellence.org> (accessed Jul. 18, 2011).

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Tennessee First to the Top: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

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“Our STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] data is troubling. Although 79% of students who take the assessment are proficient or advanced, just 65% of African-American students are proficient or advanced on the state’s algebra I end-of-course assessment. The level of proficiency on this assessment is significantly lower than that on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment. For example, on the 2009 NAEP assessment in mathematics, the average score for Tennessee 8th graders was lower than that in 36 states and not significantly different from the average in nine states. Tennessee 8th-graders scored higher than only five other states’ 8th-graders on the math NAEP. Additionally, the state did not see statistically significant gains in math achievement in the 8th grade since the 2007 NAEP. NAEP science results are not much better.”

Source: State of Tennessee, “Race to the Top Application

Background

Tennessee was one of two states awarded a Race to the Top (RTTT) federal grant in March 2010. A significant portion of the \$500 million received will target the subjects of mathematics and science, and teacher effectiveness. Tennessee’s STEM initiative will result in a statewide network of programs and schools designed to promote and expand the teaching and learning of STEM education, as noted in the state’s RTTT application:

Tennessee will be a national leader in STEM education. At its core, our STEM approach is designed to bolster the philosophy underpinning President Obama’s “Educate to Innovate” campaign to move American students from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math achievement over the next decade. As a state that is rich in STEM assets, Tennessee strongly believes that America’s future hinges on our ability to improve teaching and learning in the STEM disciplines.

One of the key provisions in Tennessee’s RTTT application was the emphasis of STEM in the competitive preference priority. This section will present an overview of the STEM reform initiatives in First to the Top (FTTT), as described in Tennessee’s RTTT application, explain where the state currently is in terms of implementation of the STEM reform initiatives, and outline the expected results of these initiatives.

Activities

Tennessee’s STEM plans, as outlined in the RTTT application, included eight specific initiatives. Tennessee’s RTTT budget allocated \$35,575,000 for these initiatives. Specifically, Tennessee’s FTTT grant allocates \$15.7 million to be utilized for establishing the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN).

Specifically, the state will:

- Partner with THEC to implement the UTeach program to recruit undergraduate math and science majors into teaching. The UTeach expansion will dramatically increase the number of secondary math and science teachers statewide.
- Use STEM Centers located at institutions of higher education to increase the effectiveness of current math and science teachers through use of targeted professional development, action research projects with teachers, and introduction of new curricular approaches and program models.
- Link together all STEM efforts in the state to accelerate shared learning experiences and encourage formal and informal professional development to increase teacher effectiveness in STEM fields.
- Increase the number of effective teachers in shortage areas such as math, science, special education, and English as a Second Language (ESL) so that 90 percent of the state’s teachers

in these areas are deemed effective by 2013-14.

- Request the number of mathematics and science teachers in participating local education agencies (LEAs) who were evaluated as effective or better in the prior academic year.
- Create STEM-focused high schools using existing legislation that allows LEAs to partner with post-secondary institutions to establish innovative high schools.
- Develop teachers through preservice training on STEM disciplines.
- Provide content area training for inservice teachers in STEM disciplines.

Key First to the Top STEM investments include:

- Teacher Training and Professional Development;
- STEM Platform Schools;
- STEM Regional Hubs; and
- STEM Network Infrastructure.
 - Modeled in part on the Ohio STEM Learning Network managed by Battelle Memorial Institute, the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN) will bring together existing, emerging, and new STEM education partners and stakeholders in a learning network intentionally designed to share best practices, enhance critical start-up efforts, and boost student achievement.

Exhibit 1 outlines Tennessee’s STEM initiatives.

Exhibit 1: STEM Initiatives in Tennessee’s Race to the Top Application

Initiative	Description	Budget
STEM Innovation Network	Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) will partner with Battelle Memorial Institute to establish a Stem Innovation Network (TSIN) designed to promote and expand the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in K-12 public schools across Tennessee.	\$1,667,800
STEM Platform Schools	TDOE will provide funding for the first and second year to expand existing STEM programs in Knox County and Metro Nashville. In the third and fourth year, based on other school successes, TDOE will provide seed funding through a competitive grant process for three additional programs or schools (\$500,000 per year per school over two years). UT Knoxville/Knox County Public Schools (\$2,000,000) Metro Nashville STEM Academies Program Expansion (\$2,000,000) TN Virtual Charter School offered through Electronic Learning Center (\$2,000,000) Up to 3 additional STEM Schools or Academy Models (\$3,000,000)	\$9,000,000
Regional STEM Hubs	TDOE will contract with several regional organizations (e.g., higher education institutions) to provide additional STEM professional development and teaching practice for teachers. TDOE will develop regional hubs for STEM schools, professional development and teaching practice (independently or partnering with existing STEM assets such as K-12 schools, universities, and professional development centers.	\$5,380,000
Strengthening Instruction in Tennessee Elementary Schools: Focus on Mathematics (SITES-M)	Tennessee will expand the SITES-M program. The SITES-M program partners Tennessee colleges and universities with elementary and middle schools to help teachers improve mathematics instruction. TDOE will expand its contract with SITES-M, which forms STEM partnerships between universities and elementary/middle schools, to double its number of university sites from 5 to 10.	\$8,608,800

Initiative	Description	Budget
Integrating PBS into Electronic Learning Center (ELC)	The ELC will be expanded to include a web-based Digital Learning Library (DLL) that will be provided by PBS. PBS online content can amplify the professional development and curricular options with embedded assessments in a variety of disciplines, but particularly science-related content.	\$4,628,952
UTeach Program Replication	<p>Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and the TDOE have a joint RFP currently to award UTeach replication grants in the amount of \$1.825 million over five years to two Tennessee institutions.</p> <p>The U-Teach program is currently in place at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK) and it will be expanded to include University of Tennessee-Chattanooga (UTC) and University of Memphis (UM). The program helps math and science majors earn their teaching certificate by the time they graduate. The goal of the program is to increase the number of math and science teachers in the state by graduating over 100 teachers every year.</p>	\$4,104,000
STEM Centers for Professional Development	TDOE will contract with existing STEM Centers of Excellence to provide additional STEM professional development for K-12 teachers.	\$6,480,000
Oak Ridge Associated Universities STEM Teacher Training Academy	The DOE will contract with Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) to provide training to 150 Lead STEM teachers (statewide) on STEM learning.	\$1,604,316
Teach Tennessee Expansion	TDOE will contract to expand the Teach Tennessee program by providing training for an additional 35 teachers per year in high-need fields.	\$645,600

Accomplishments

- The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN) has been established to promote and expand the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in K-12 public schools across Tennessee.
- The state's first STEM platform school opened in fall 2010.
- The UTeach Program was replicated at UT-Chattanooga and University of Memphis.
- THEC awarded \$1,825,000 in RTTT grant funds to Austin Peay State University, East Tennessee State University, Lipscomb University, Middle Tennessee State University, Tennessee Technological University, and University of Tennessee-Chattanooga to provide professional development to K-12 teachers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM fields).

Austin Peay State University

Momentum: Building Capacity for Change Through Connections

STEM Subject: Mathematics - Elementary Mathematics

Description: The goal is to increase student achievement in mathematics by increasing elementary teachers' capacity to teach mathematics in a STEM-centered environment.

Objectives:

- Deepen elementary teachers' content knowledge of the Common Core State Standards for mathematics through problem solving.
- Broaden elementary teachers' pedagogical content knowledge by making connections to children's literature and science and by incorporating appropriate technology.
- Strengthen teachers' understanding of the role of STEM in developing numeracy.
- Deepen students' understanding of the core concepts of algebraic thinking, measurement, and data analysis.

Total Proposal(s) Funding: \$138,200

East Tennessee State University

1. MICH: Modeling Instruction of Chemistry in High-schools

STEM Subject: Chemistry – High School: Pedagogical content knowledge in chemistry

Description: The overarching goal of the project is to further develop chemistry teachers' pedagogical content knowledge by implementing evidence-based pedagogical strategies, which will result in increased learning of chemistry for high school students in Northeast Tennessee.

This will be accomplished by implementing Modeling Instruction pedagogy informed by science education research. Modeling Instruction is an innovative, effective pedagogy that structures inquiry around scientific models. It develops in students the ability to analyze data, reach and defend conclusions; and it emphasizes experimental design.

2. Reaching for Excellence in Elementary School Science through Inquiry, Standards, Problem-based Learning

STEM Subject: Science and Technology- Elementary Science

Description: The vision of this project, called **Reaching for Excellence in Elementary School Science through Inquiry, Standards, Problem-based Learning** to enable elementary teachers to reach for excellence in school science through *Inquiry-based, Standards-based, Problem-based* and *Cloud Computing Technology-based* (ISPT-based) learning environments.

The project will build up two instructional infrastructures in preparation for a STEM Regional Hub: (1) *A Bank of Human Resource*: educating and creating a cadre of knowledgeable and skillful elementary science master teachers and teacher leaders; (2) *A Virtual Instructional Hub*: building up a web-based instructional resource network in the region.

Total Proposal(s) Funding: \$341,484

Lipscomb University

Hands-on Chemistry

STEM Subject: Science/Chemistry – High School Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Chemistry

Description: The proposed program will be part of the expansion of the STEM educational opportunities by providing high school chemistry teachers with the content and pedagogy to meet the current chemistry curriculum standards in Tennessee.

Both content and pedagogy will be learned through collaborative experiment-based learning activities.

Total Proposal(s) Funding: \$113,027

Middle Tennessee State University

Project EMPOWER: Enhancing Mathematical Proficiency through Opportunities with Extensive Representation

STEM Subject: Mathematics – Elementary Math

Description: Project Empower will work with teachers grades 2-6 to change their beliefs about mathematics and the teaching of mathematics, increase their mathematical knowledge for teaching elementary school mathematics and improve their instructional effectiveness.

The content focus is the number and operation strand with the themes of building number sense, building both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency, and viewing algebra as an extension of number and operation running throughout this project.

Total Proposal(s) Funding: \$200,000

Tennessee Technological University

1. Embedding Inquiry & Technology/Engineering Standards into Physical Science Content for grades 3-5

STEM Subject: Science – Elementary Science

Description: The goal of this project is to transform the teaching of elementary physical science through increased teacher content and pedagogical content knowledge, use of modern technology appropriate for elementary classrooms, and teacher access to technology for teaching.

Objectives:

- Increase pedagogical content knowledge of physical science, engineering and technology as demonstrated by improved pre/post test scores
- Develop an understanding of the profession of engineering and the engineering design process through problem based learning.
- Develop and teach physical science lessons that integrate inquiry, technology and engineering standards.

2. Developing Middle School Mathematics Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

STEM Subject: Mathematics – Middle School: Programs focused on increasing PCK with emphasis on learning content via pedagogy

Description: This project will emphasize the development of mathematics content via investigations, problem solving, hands-on and group activities, and use of manipulatives/technologies.

Grades 4-8 teachers participating in this project will:

1. Increase their mathematical content knowledge by developing a deeper understanding of the algebra/geometry topics in the Common Core and TN Curriculum Standards.
2. Increase their pedagogical content knowledge and demonstrate knowledge of multiple ways for developing students' mathematical process skills.
3. Implement strategies for deepening their students' understanding of algebra/geometry concepts.
4. Develop and teach lessons aligned with TN state standards that focus on both content and process standards for middle school mathematics.
5. Be proficient in the appropriate use of resources for the teaching of mathematics.

3. Numeracy and Multiple Representations for Grades 1-3 Teachers

STEM Subject: Mathematics – Elementary Mathematics

Description: The goal of the project is to transform the teaching of primary grade math through increased teacher content and pedagogical content knowledge, explicit examination of teacher beliefs about teaching math, proficiency in the use of modern technology appropriate for primary grade classrooms, and teacher access to technology and equipment for teaching.

Objectives:

- Increase participants' content knowledge in mathematics
- Increase participants' pedagogical content knowledge
- Change participants' beliefs about teaching mathematics as they experience math as primary grade students and then replicate the same project activities in their classrooms
- Increase participants' proficiency with the use of innovative teaching tools such as the iPad.

4. Transforming Matter and Classrooms- High School Chemistry Pedagogical Content Knowledge

STEM Subject: Chemistry: High School – Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Chemistry

Description: The goal of the project is to transform the teaching of chemistry through increased teacher content and pedagogical content knowledge, explicit examination of teacher beliefs about teaching chemistry, proficiency in the use of modern technology appropriate for high school classroom, and teacher access to technology and equipment for teaching.

Participating teachers will:

- Increase in their conceptual chemistry knowledge
- Increase in their pedagogical chemistry content knowledge
- Change their beliefs about teaching chemistry as they experience chemistry as a student and replicate project activities in their classroom
- Be proficient in the use of resources for the teaching of chemistry that will transform their classrooms into interactive learning studios.

Total Proposal(s) Funding: \$632,761

University of Tennessee - Chattanooga

1. Numeracy, Representation and STEM Connections for K-2 Teachers

STEM Subject: Mathematics: Elementary Mathematics – Numeracy and Representation

Description: This project will focus on improving numeracy for 32 K-2 teachers and will address the topic of building numeracy with a clear focus on multiple representations.

This project is designed to increase teacher pedagogical content knowledge and subsequent student mathematics achievement.

2. Technology/Engineering + Literacy = MATH Understanding (TELMU)

STEM Subject: Engineering: Middle/High School Algebra

Description: The goal of the proposed project, Technology/Engineering + Literacy = MATH Understanding (TELMU), is to improve the ability of middle school and ninth grade mathematics teachers to teach mathematics concepts through a combination of instruction in key literacy strategies and active participation in quantitative experiments and activities.

TELMU will integrate literacy strategies with technology- and engineering-based activities to expand the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in two areas: (1) the power of learning through experience, including effective ways of using applications to learn math; and (2) the role of vocabulary and metacognition in developing mathematical reasoning, conceptual understanding, and problem solving ability.

Total Proposal(s) Funding: \$399,905

Source: OREA selected information quoted from analysis of STEM professional development proposals and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, “STEM Professional Development: Proposals Receiving Funding,” <http://www.tn.gov/thec> (accessed Jul 26, 2011); Tennessee Higher Education Commission, “THEC Awards \$1.8 Million for K-12 STEM Professional Development,” <http://www.tn.gov/thec> (accessed Jul 25, 2011).

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