

Tennessee Schools On Notice 2001-02



System Report: Rutherford County Schools

John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Education Accountability
September 2002



STATE OF TENNESSEE

COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY

John G. Morgan

Comptroller

STATE CAPITOL

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0264

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September 16, 2002

The Honorable John S. Wilder
Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh
Speaker of the House of Representatives
and
Members of the House and Senate Education Committees

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Tennessee Code Annotated 49-1-602 requires the Office of Education Accountability and the Tennessee Department of Education to conduct a joint study of schools and/or systems placed on notice of probation. In September 2001, the Department and the State Board of Education officially placed 98 schools in 11 systems on notice. This system report is one of 11 addressing the affected school systems.

OEA analysts reviewed aspects of each system, other than curriculum and instruction, which current research indicates may affect student achievement, including governance and management, funding and resources, parent and community involvement, and facility condition. Each report provides recommendations for improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John G. Morgan".

John G. Morgan

Comptroller of the Treasury

cc: Commissioner Faye Taylor
Department of Education

Tennessee Schools On Notice 2001-02



System Report: Rutherford County Schools

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John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury
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The Office of Education Accountability was created in the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury by *Tennessee Code Annotated* 4-3-308 to monitor the performance of school boards, superintendents, school districts, schools, and school personnel in accordance with the performance standards set out in the Education Improvement Act or by regulations of the State Board of Education. The office is to conduct such studies, analyses, or audits as it may determine necessary to evaluate education performance and progress, or as may be assigned to it by the Governor or General Assembly.

Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Education Accountability,
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RUTHERFORD COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Introduction

In 2001, the Tennessee Department of Education identified 98 schools in 11 systems needing to improve student academic performance. The State Board of Education approved the list in September, and the commissioner officially placed the schools on notice. One school in the Rutherford County school system is now on notice:

- Holloway High School.

Once schools are on notice, *Tennessee Code Annotated* 49-1-602 requires the Department of Education and the Comptroller's Office of Education Accountability to study jointly the schools and/or systems. The study must produce recommendations on how school systems can improve and meet state performance standards. This report is the Office of Education Accountability's portion of the Rutherford County school system study.

The Department of Education and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) determined the two agencies would study schools and systems on notice separately. Each agency designed research protocol to examine areas within its expertise. The department concentrated on curriculum and instruction, and the OEA examined other areas potentially affecting student achievement. The OEA considered the following areas:

- general school, student, and staff information;
- governance and management;
- funding and resources;
- parent, community, and business involvement;
- facilities and climate; and
- class size.

The study addressed individual schools to the extent possible.

The Department of Education contracted with retired educators, referred to as Exemplary Educators, to provide technical assistance to the systems and schools on notice. OEA staff did not meet with Exemplary Educators (EEs) during the joint study because the Department of Education felt interviews with OEA could compromise EEs' relationships with systems and schools. Department of Education staff were also concerned about EEs' time constraints.

Background and Methodology

The 98 Tennessee schools placed on notice failed to meet achievement and growth criteria established by the Tennessee Department of Education under the authority granted in *Tennessee Code Annotated* 49-1-601 – 602, displayed in the following figures. The law states that schools placed on notice must improve student achievement by the end of the first year or be placed on probation. Schools on notice that achieve adequate yearly progress after one year will remain on notice but will be specified as

“improving.”¹ Schools unable to achieve adequate yearly progress can be on probation up to two years before facing sanctions such as reconstitution or alternative governance. The following figures display the criteria developed by the Department of Education to identify schools needing improvement.

K-8 criteria used to place schools on notice:

Achievement criteria

School-wide three-year achievement averages in reading, language arts, and mathematics less than 40 NCE (normal curve equivalent)

Schools on notice have a three-year achievement pattern of 48-73% of their student population in the below average group.

Growth factors (Adequate Yearly Progress)

1. School-wide cumulative three-year value added of 100 percent in reading, language arts, and mathematics
2. Closing the achievement gap by a reduction in the number/percentage of students in the below average group in reading, language arts, mathematics, and writing

Schools on notice failed to meet one or both of the growth factors.

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Accountability)

9-12 criteria used to place schools on notice:

Achievement criteria

Achievement levels in Algebra I End of Course, 11th grade writing, and ACT composite

Schools identified as on notice had below average achievement in two or more of these areas.

Growth factors

1. Positive Value Added (meeting predicted targets)
2. Closing the achievement gap by a reduction in the number/percentage of students in below average group
3. Positive trend in reducing dropout rate

Schools on notice failed to meet one or more of the growth factors.

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Accountability)

To complete its study, the OEA assigned teams of analysts to the 11 systems with schools on notice. The department provided names of district liaisons who acted as guides through each school system’s administrative structure. At a minimum, staff interviewed the following persons in each system:

- District liaisons designated by Directors of Schools
- Department of Education Regional Directors
- Principals of schools on notice

Other district staff members often participated in the interviews or were interviewed individually. OEA staff also:

- Conducted an extensive literature review of school improvement strategies and low performing schools issues.

¹ With the passage of the 2001 “No Child Left Behind” Act, Tennessee has merged its accountability system with federal law. According to the merged systems, schools must show improvement for two consecutive years to move off notice completely.

- Reviewed audits of systems with schools on notice.
- Participated in staff training focused on school visits.
- Observed training for Exemplary Educators conducted by the Department of Education and AEL (contractor for Exemplary Educators program).
- Attended school board meetings in some systems with schools on notice.
- Requested and reviewed available documentation from each system.

The OEA's study resulted in 11 system reports. Each system report includes background information, strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations.

See Appendix A for a list of persons interviewed and documents reviewed regarding Rutherford County Schools. See Appendix B for the current status of schools on notice. See Appendix C for the system's response to the report.

Common Characteristics of On-notice Schools and State-level Concerns

Common characteristics of low-performing schools

Research indicates that schools with low achievement are disproportionately likely to:

- have a large number of students from low income and minority backgrounds
- be located in communities with significant concentrations of poverty and its associated problems
- have low standards and expectations for their students
- have a weak curriculum
- have limited parental involvement
- employ less experienced and less well-qualified teachers and other instructional staff
- have high staff turnover rates
- have lower morale than in other schools
- have a school environment that lacks order and discipline²

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) notes that separate studies of school performance in North Carolina and Texas found common characteristics among low-performing schools similar to those listed above: weak leadership, inexperienced teachers, high turnover in faculty, and a lack of focus on state content standards.³

Common characteristics of Tennessee's on-notice schools

OEA staff found that no single system with schools on notice could be characterized by every factor listed above. However, at least some of the factors are true of most of the systems and schools. Several have large numbers of students from low income and minority backgrounds and have large concentrations of poverty in their communities.

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, January 2001, *School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

³ Jim Watts, *Getting Results with Accountability: Rating Schools, Assisting Schools, Improving Schools*, Southern Regional Education Board, p. 18.

Most have limited parental involvement, many have high staff turnover rates, and some employ a large number of teachers that are less experienced and less qualified (as shown by the number of teachers with waivers and permits).

In addition, analysts noted two other conditions present among many of Tennessee's on-notice schools: high student mobility and a sense of isolation, even in urban settings. High mobility is shown to lower achievement for individual students, but may also have a general effect of lowering school- and district-wide performance.⁴

Some of the rural on-notice schools are located in extremely geographically isolated areas, with few opportunities for students to experience other settings. Principals at several urban on-notice schools noted that large numbers of their students had limited experiences with opportunities that, in many cases, are geographically near them. Some principals indicated that many Memphis City students had never been in downtown Memphis before, for example, or visited the Memphis Zoo.

State-level findings in Tennessee's systems with schools on notice

An overall analysis of the findings from each of Tennessee's 11 systems with schools on notice during the 2001-02 school year revealed some common issues, which can be grouped into seven major areas:

- student readiness;
- teacher shortages;
- technology;
- school accreditation;
- data challenges;
- funding; and
- placing schools on notice and providing technical assistance.

A separate state-level report provides detailed findings and recommendations regarding these issues. In the 11 system reports, this symbol ★ denotes an area for which a corresponding conclusion and recommendation appear in the state-level report. The state-level report may be accessed at www.comptroller.state.tn.us/orea/reports or a printed copy may be requested from the Office of Education Accountability at (615)401-7911.

⁴ David Kerbow, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, "Patterns of Urban Student Mobility and Local School Reform," October 1996, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report05entire.html> (accessed March 14, 2002).

Rutherford County School System Background Characteristics

SCHOOLS and STAFF 2000-01	
Number of schools	31
Number of schools on notice	1
Number of teachers	1,651
Number of teacher waivers	14
Number of teacher permits	4
Average teacher salary	\$37,284

(Source: Rutherford County Report Card 2001)

Rutherford County's per-pupil expenditure was \$5,665 in 2000-01, compared to a statewide average of \$6,055 and a national average of \$7,436. The average teacher salary was \$37,284, compared to a statewide average of \$37,431 in the 2000-01 school year. Rutherford County relies more heavily on state funding (51.4 percent) than the average, but less than most other Tennessee school systems. The average state contribution is 47 percent.⁵

FUNDING 2000-01	
Total expenditure	\$180,385,876
Per-pupil expenditure	\$5,665
Federal revenue	5.8%
State revenue	51.4%
<i>includes BEP state share</i>	\$62,693,000
Local revenue	42.7%
<i>includes BEP local share</i>	\$28,885,000

(Source: Basic Education Program Spreadsheet 2000-01; Tennessee Department of Education Annual Report 2001, Rutherford County Report Card 2001)

Student Population 2000-01	
Number of students	25,793
African American	10.7%
Caucasian	84.8%
Other	4.5%
English language learners	1.4%
Special education	15.2%
Free and reduced lunch	22.3%

(Source: Rutherford County Report Card 2001)

Additional System Information

Rutherford County has two distinct alternative programs. Daniel McKee Alternative School in Murfreesboro serves students in grades 7-12. The school system assigns students to Daniel McKee for disciplinary reasons as an alternative to expulsion and

⁵ Tennessee Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/state1.htm> (accessed February 15, 2002).

based on the recommendation of either the principal or superintendent. Daniel McKee provides behavior management activities as well as academic credit.

Rutherford County also created the program at Holloway High School in 1998 as an option for students at high risk of dropping out or not earning sufficient credit to graduate. This alternative program offers academic and some vocational courses, block scheduling, reduced class sizes, and other services targeting the needs of these at-risk students. (See the description of Holloway High below.)

Schools on Notice Background Characteristics

HOLLOWAY HIGH SCHOOL, 2000-01	
Grades served	9-12
Number of students	117
African American	15.5%
Caucasian	84.5%
Other	0
English language learners*	0
Special education	0
Free and reduced lunch	20.6%
Number of teachers employed	15
Number of administrators	2

*(Source: Holloway High School Report Card 2001; *Principal interview)*

The Rutherford County school system created the program in 1998 at Holloway specifically for students at high risk of dropping out of high school. Parents and students choose to enroll there, and the school accepts students 16 years old and higher with too few credits to graduate. The school meets those at-risk students' needs by providing smaller class sizes, on-site childcare, and block scheduling. The school also provides evening courses for the entire school system. Rutherford County allocates nearly twice the system average funds per pupil to Holloway to pay for its specialized services.

Holloway was not on the Department of Education's "heads up" list in the 2000-01 school year.

In 2000-01, Holloway employed one part-time and 14 full-time teachers and two administrators. The principal has been at Holloway since its inception in 1998. The campus consists of several buildings with space for academic as well as non-academic classes such as auto mechanics and art. An on-site child care facility provides supervision for students' children as well as opportunities for caregiver training and experience. Students with children enrolled in the day care program are required to spend a certain number of free periods a week working in the nursery.

Rutherford County provides approximately \$11,000 per student at Holloway, nearly twice the system average. The extra dollars are primarily for class-size reduction.

Holloway also receives Title VI and Education Edge support and a \$100,000 Baldrige grant, around which much of staff development and instructional philosophy is built. The school has also incorporated advisory committees as part of the Baldrige process. These include community and business representation, and they emphasize “real world” applications and student career development.⁶

Holloway High receives community support through the adopt-a-school program, through which local businesses assist schools. The school’s partner, Middle Tennessee Medical Center, provides tangible resources as well as advisory support. There is no formal parent organization at the school, but parents must sign a support contract when their child is admitted. The school contacts and involves parents in specific projects as needed.

The Holloway building and campus provide adequate space and physical resources for the school’s various academic, vocational, and enrichment activities.

Analysis and Conclusions

Note that the symbol ★ denotes an area for which a corresponding conclusion and recommendation appear in the state-level report.

Holloway High has had success in recruiting, retaining and graduating students for whom just attending school has been a challenge. The Rutherford County school system established at Holloway High School an alternative program for students at high risk of dropping out or not graduating. The program is open to students age 16 and above who would not graduate if they continued at their current rate of progress. Students at the school are often struggling with parenthood, family problems, and economic hardship. The program at Holloway strives to support these students in and out of the classroom to make graduation a realistic goal. According to the principal, Holloway had a 75 percent graduation rate in 2000-01, and he expects the 2001-02 rate to be higher, with drop-outs down 50 percent.⁷

Holloway High School’s recent test performance was high, showing positive results of the school system’s investments there. On the fall 2001 Gateway exams, 91.7 percent of Holloway students taking the Algebra I exam passed (scored “proficient” or “advanced”), and 100 percent taking the Biology exam passed.⁸ Holloway had the highest pass rate among Rutherford County high schools (97 percent) and an average school score at the median for the system on the eleventh grade writing assessment in 2001-02.⁹

⁶ Interview with J. Hulon Watson, Superintendent, Rutherford County Public Schools, on January 24, 2002; interview with Ivan Duggin, Principal, Holloway High School, on February 6, 2002.

⁷ Telephone interview with Ivan Duggin, Principal, Holloway High School, on May 30, 2002. The Department of Education’s Report Card for Holloway shows a projected cohort rate of 90.2 percent in 2001. However, because of the school’s unique structure and only three years of existence, these projections are not likely to accurately reflect the school’s performance.

⁸ Fall 2001 Gateway test data provided by the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Evaluation and Assessment.

⁹ Data are from the Tennessee Department of Education, Evaluation and Assessment Division.

Rutherford County's program at Holloway appears to be a model on which other school systems may base similar programs.

- Holloway draws from among the lowest performing students in other Rutherford County high schools, easing the task of raising achievement in those schools.
- Holloway may have a higher probability of success in improving student performance than if it served all at-risk students because parents and students choose to participate in the Holloway program.
- Rutherford County recognizes that raising the achievement of at-risk students requires significant additional resources. The system spends approximately \$11,000 per student at Holloway. The average class size ranges from 13 to 14 students.¹⁰
- Tests scores and graduation rates show that Holloway is reaching its goals with many of these at-risk students.

Neither the Rutherford County school system nor the Holloway High School staff plans to take any special action with regard to Holloway High School's on-notice status. The school is already a program targeting the needs of students who have fallen behind. School system and school staff believe that Holloway's recent strong Gateway achievements indicate it will move off the on-notice list.¹¹

¹⁰ Telephone interview with Ivan Duggin, Principal, Holloway High School, on May 30, 2002.

¹¹ Interview with J. Hulon Watson, Superintendent, Rutherford County Public Schools, on January 24, 2002; interview with Ivan Duggin, Principal, Holloway High School, on February 6, 2002.

Appendix A

Individuals Interviewed and Documents Reviewed

Individuals

J. Hulon Watson, Rutherford County Superintendent;
Laura Harper, Rutherford County Assistant Superintendent;
Jeff Sandvig, Rutherford County Assistant Superintendent;
Ivan Duggin, Holloway High School Principal; and
Joyce Haynes, Upper Cumberland Regional Office Director.

Documents Reviewed

Holloway High school improvement plan
2001 school and system report cards
Principal and superintendent performance evaluations
Rutherford County School Board Policy Manual
Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, Rutherford County, for Years Ended June 30,
2001 and June 30, 2000

Appendix B
Current Status of Schools On Notice
as reported by the Department of Education

(Note: This list includes Title I schools in School Improvement that were not on notice in 2001-02.)

Achieved good standing by showing two years of adequate progress
2000-01 and 2001-02

School system	Schools in good standing
Anderson County	Grand Oaks
Campbell County	West Lafollette
Cocke County	Grassy Fork Northwest
Cumberland County	Pine View
Fayette County	Central Elementary LaGrange Moscow
Humboldt City	East End Elementary Main Street Elementary
Henderson County	Scotts Hill School
Morgan County	Oakdale Petros Joyner
Harriman City	Central Intermediate
Memphis City	Cherokee Elementary Douglass Elementary Evans Elementary Pyramid Academy

Schools making adequate progress
2001-02

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Blount County	Eagleton Elementary
Campbell County	Stony Fork
Carter County	Range Elementary
Claiborne County	Powell Valley Elementary
Cleveland City	Arnold Elementary Blythe-Bower Elementary
Davidson County	Shwab Elementary West End Middle Pearl Cohn High School Whites Creek High School
Fayette County	Jefferson Elementary Southwest Elementary Fayette Ware High School Somerville Elementary

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Grainger County	Joppa Elementary Washburn Elementary
Grundy County	Tracy Elementary
Hamblen County	Lincoln Heights Elementary
Hamilton County	Calvin Donaldson Howard Elementary Howard School of Academics and Technology
Hawkins County	Clinch School
Kingsport City	Roosevelt Elementary
Knox County	Sarah M. Greene Elementary
Lawrence County	Ingram Sowell Elementary
Maury County	James Woody/Mt. Pleasant Elementary
Perry County	Perry County High School
Putnam County	Uffleman Elementary
Rutherford County	Holloway High School
Union County	Luttrell Elementary Maynardville Elementary
Wayne County	Frank Hughes
Memphis City	Berclair Elementary Bethel Grove Elementary Coleman Elementary Cummings Elementary Dunn Avenue Elementary Egypt Elementary Kingsbury Elementary Klondike Elementary Lauderdale Elementary Oakshire Elementary Raleigh- Bartlett Scenic Hills Brookmeade Elementary Corning Elementary Fairley Elementary Frayser Elementary Graceland Elementary Levi Elementary Lincoln Elementary Locke Elementary

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Memphis City (continued)	Orleans Elementary Raineshaven Elementary Raleigh Egypt Middle School Shannon Elementary Sharpe Elementary Sheffield Elementary Trezevant High School Whitney Elementary Melrose High School Northside High School Oakhaven High School Whitehaven High School

**Schools failing to make adequate improvement 2001-02
Recommended for probation 2002-03**

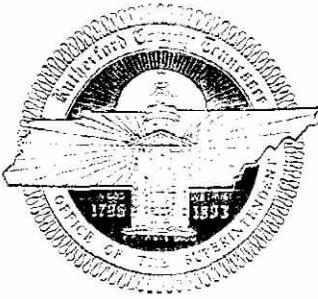
School System	Probation
Claiborne County	Clairfield Elementary
Davidson County	Kirkpatrick Elementary Warner Elementary Maplewood High School Stratford High School
Fayette County	Northwest Elementary
Hamilton County	Chattanooga Middle School Dalewood Middle School East Lake Elementary John P. Franklin Middle School Hardy Elementary Orchard Knob Elementary Orchard Knob Middle School Woodmore Elementary
Hardeman County	Grand Junction Elementary
Knox County	Maynard Elementary Lonsdale Elementary
Memphis City	Airways Middle School Carver High School Chickasaw Junior High Cypress Junior High Denver Elementary

School System	Probation
Memphis City (continued)	Dunbar Elementary Fairview Junior High Frayser High School Geeter Middle School Georgian Hills Elementary Georgian Hills Junior High Hamilton Middle School Hawkins Mill Elementary Hillcrest High School Hollywood Elementary Humes Middle School Lanier Junior High Larose Lester Elementary Longview Middle School Oakhaven High School Riverview Middle School Sheffield High School Sherwood Middle School Spring Hill Elementary Springdale Treadwell Elementary Treadwell High School Trezevant High School Vance Middle School Westhaven Elementary Westside High School Westwood Elementary Westwood High School Winchester Elementary Booker T. Washington High School East High School Fairley High School Hamilton High School Kingsbury High School Manassas High School Middle College High School Mitchell Road High School Raleigh Egypt High School South Side High School Wooddale High School

Appendix C

System Response

Each system was given an opportunity to review and respond to the report. A copy of the system's written response begins on the next page.



RUTHERFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS

2240 Southpark Boulevard

Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37128

Phone (615) 893-5812 • Fax (615) 904-3770

J. Hulon Watson
Superintendent

DATE RECEIVED

SEP 18 2002

OFFICES OF
RESEARCH & EDUCATION
ACCOUNTABILITY

September 16, 2002

Ethel Detch, Director
Office of Education Accountability
505 Deaderick St., Suite 1700
Nashville, TN 37243-0268

Dear Ms. Detch,

Rutherford County is in receipt of the system report regarding Holloway High School. We have no additional comments to make. If there is anything else you need, please let me know.

Sincerely,

J. Hulon Watson
Superintendent

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