

# Tennessee

# LEADERS FOR EQUITY

# PLAYBOOK



JANUARY 2022 EDITION



# *Table of* **CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>EQUITY SHIFTS</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>EQUITY COMMITMENTS</b>
<b>33</b>	<b>KEY TERMS</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTIONS &amp; ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>

# Tennessee

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Teachers and educational leaders in each of Tennessee's school districts and educator preparation programs recognize the importance of making and supporting significant shifts in mindset and practice to provide and sustain equitable outcomes for all students. This focus on equitable outcomes for all students is reflected in the Volunteer State's priorities and plans, and impacts all Tennessee's districts, schools, and classrooms.

If school, district, and community leaders believe in and take action to create equitable outcomes for all students, then all districts and schools will experience significant, positive shifts for students related to these **equity commitments**:

1. Decrease Chronic Absenteeism
2. Reduce Disproportionate Suspension and Expulsion Rates
3. Increase Early Postsecondary Opportunities
4. Provide Equitable Access to Effective Teachers
5. Recruit and Retain a Diverse Teaching Force
6. Embed Cultural Competence in School Practices
7. Partner with Community Allies
8. Allocate Resources Equitably



## Ensuring equitable outcomes for **all students** requires commitment from leaders for equity at all levels:



highly trained school leaders



district leadership



school boards



community allies



teacher/teacher leaders



family/guardians

### Equity

In the field of education, equity means that every student has access to effective teachers and the resources, experiences, and rigor they need to be successful.

### Who is a leader for equity?

A leader for equity works to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps and ensure success for **all students** by identifying and addressing personal and institutional bias and barriers and providing strategies to ensure all students have equitable access to:

- effective educators
- rigorous instruction and engaging learning opportunities
- social, academic, and community supports
- resources to ensure success

### About the Playbook

This playbook was developed by a statewide team of school, district, community, higher education, and state leaders with substantial feedback received from a comprehensive set of stakeholder groups. It features:

An **action plan framework** to assist leaders in the selection, implementation, and monitoring of the most relevant equity commitments for their community

An **equity shifts continuum** describing the common misconceptions that must be examined and discussed for each equity commitment before moving to an equity mindset

**Key actions and resources** that can be taken and used by school, district, school board, and community leaders for each of the eight equity commitments

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## How to Use the Playbook

This playbook is designed to support school, district, and community leaders who are committed to providing and sustaining equitable outcomes for all students. It was designed, and is intended to be used, with these guiding principles in mind:

- The playbook is a **flexible support tool** for school, district, and community leaders.
- The playbook should be used to **address existing challenges and utilize current resources**.
- Committing to an equity mindset requires **important conversations about common misconceptions** before taking action toward creating equitable outcomes for all students.
- The eight equity commitments should be used **selectively**, chosen through a needs assessment using school, district, and community data, and **implemented using an equity action plan**.
- The actions for each equity commitment should be viewed as a **menu of possible strategies** to be carefully chosen, informed by school, district, and community data.

## Equity Action Plan

1. **Analyze** school, district, and community data, policies, and mindsets to identify specific equity challenges and barriers.
  - Based on the analysis of current data and mindsets, what are the 2-3 critical equity challenges facing you and your colleagues?
  - To what extent might existing policies be hindering equitable outcomes for all students?
2. **Select** relevant equity commitments.
  - Which commitments in the playbook would be most impactful for addressing these 2-3 challenges?
  - To what extent do these commitments and the related actions align with the vision and goals of your strategic plan?
3. **Communicate** the rationale.
  - How will all of your stakeholders understand and articulate the answer to the question: Why do we need to care about equitable outcomes for all students in our school, district, and community?
  - How will you develop understanding and buy-in with stakeholder groups around selected commitments and actions?
4. **Implement** equity commitments and actions.
  - Which actions are most relevant and impactful for addressing these 2-3 challenges?
  - How will you embed the commitments and actions into existing policies and practices so that stakeholders feel supported and view them as cohesive and relevant?
5. **Monitor and adjust** the plan.
  - What data and feedback will you use to monitor the implementation of these commitments and related actions?
  - How will you communicate and implement any adjustments?

These eight equity commitments require significant shifts in mindset and practice to provide and sustain equitable outcomes for all students. ***Creating equitable outcomes for all students requires acknowledging current, deep-seated mindsets about race and culture before individual or collective shifts to an equity mindset can occur.*** These equity shifts rest upon the powerful notion that student outcomes will not change until adult learning and behaviors change.

## EQUITY COMMITMENT

## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

## EQUITY MINDSET

## THE RESEARCH INDICATES...

# 1

### Decrease Chronic Absenteeism

At-risk families value school less and therefore do not believe in the importance of regular attendance.

As leaders, we believe, individually and collectively, that all of our families value the importance of their children's education and understand they can experience conditions that negatively impact regular attendance.

When low income elementary students attend school regularly, they can see outsized literacy gains. They gained 8 percent more growth in kindergarten and 7 percent growth in first grade than their higher income peers.<sup>1</sup>

Attending school more than 90 percent of the time in sixth grade significantly improves the chance for students to graduate high school on time.<sup>2</sup>

# 2

### Reduce Disproportionate Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion Rates

At-risk students have less structure and consistency outside of school and therefore need more exclusionary discipline measures to instill the value of respect for authority.

As leaders, we believe and acknowledge, individually and collectively, that the lived experiences of many families differ and understand those differences do not equate to student deficiencies.

Lower-suspending schools have lower grade retention and higher graduation rates than higher-suspending schools.<sup>3</sup>

Restorative disciplinary practices are associated with large reductions in suspensions and steady and consistent achievement gains.<sup>4</sup>

# 3

### Increase Early Postsecondary Opportunities

Early postsecondary coursework is only for select students who want to continue on to college. For other students, especially those who are disadvantaged, finishing high school is the best we can hope for.

As leaders, we believe, individually and collectively, that all students can acquire the knowledge, abilities, and habits to be successful in postsecondary education and careers of their choosing.

Students completing AP courses attend college at higher rates, earn higher grades in college, are less likely to drop out of college, and graduate at higher rates than non-AP students.<sup>5</sup>

Low-income high school students completing an early postsecondary course<sup>6</sup> were 50 percent more likely to earn a college degree within six years than low income students who didn't complete an early postsecondary course.<sup>7</sup>

# 4

### Provide Equitable Access to Effective Teachers

Teachers are all equally equipped and trained to be effective with all students, regardless of their evaluation outcomes.

As leaders, we acknowledge implicit bias in ourselves and our teachers, and work to create an inclusive and supportive environment where every student has access to an effective educator who personalizes instruction and embraces difference.

Students assigned to highly effective teachers accrue 18 to 24 weeks of additional learning compared to students assigned to ineffective teachers.<sup>8</sup>

At-risk students assigned to highly effective teachers reduce the dropout rate by 3 percent.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ready, 2010  
<sup>2</sup> Ballanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007

<sup>3</sup> Fabelo, etc., 2011  
<sup>4</sup> Gonzalez, 2014

<sup>5</sup> Mattern, Marini, & Shaw, 2013  
<sup>6</sup> EPSOs in Tennessee include: Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, College Level Exam Program (CLEP), dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate (IB), local dual credit, statewide dual credit, and industry certification

<sup>7</sup> Struhl & Vargas, 2012  
<sup>8</sup> Cowan, etc., 2017

<sup>9</sup> Jackson, 2016

# EQUITY SHIFTS

# EQUITY SHIFTS

## EQUITY COMMITMENT

## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

## EQUITY MINDSET

## THE RESEARCH INDICATES...

# 5

### Recruit and Retain a Diverse Teaching Force

Teachers are all equally equipped and trained to be effective with all students, regardless of demographic background and lived experience.

As leaders, we acknowledge that students benefit from seeing teachers and mentors who reflect the diversity of our schools, and we address implicit bias when hiring, assigning, developing, and retaining teachers of color.

Students of color taught by teachers of color are likely to have positive gains in test scores, discipline, retention, and college persistence.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, these gains are realized even when students are not taught by teachers of color but attend a school where the diversity of the teachers more closely resembles that of the students.<sup>11</sup>

# 6

### Embed Cultural Competence in All Aspects of School Practices

Racial and cultural identity do not impact the perceptions, beliefs, and actions of our students and educators.

As leaders, we acknowledge and celebrate the importance, value, and strength of our students' and educators' racial, cultural, and other identities, and work to eliminate personal and institutional biases and barriers, and embrace diversity.

A culturally responsive curriculum is an integral element in reversing poor academic outcomes for students of color.<sup>12</sup> Educators who acknowledge and understand cultural differences are better suited to promote parent and family engagement. This is important because increased parent engagement has a positive impact on school attendance, test scores, and rates of school discipline.<sup>13</sup>

# 7

### Partner with Community Allies

Community partners exist to help with fundraising and carry out school funding needs.

As leaders, we believe community partnerships are stronger and more effective when, as allies, they serve a common vision, utilize the full range of assets of both partners, and provide mutually beneficial resources to improve the school community.

The development of school-community partnerships results in improved student learning, achievement, behavior, and attendance.<sup>14</sup> Schools benefit from school-community partnerships through increased parent participation in children's learning, including school volunteerism and increased resources (e.g., funding or material goods) to support student learning.<sup>15</sup>

# 8

### Allocate Resources Equitably

Providing equal general fund dollars for high-poverty and low-poverty schools is reasonable because Federal Title I funding is meant to address poverty in education.

In order to provide equity of educational opportunity and address student need, all revenues for public education should be allocated with an equity perspective. To achieve similar learning outcomes for all students, we must invest more from all funding sources (not just Title I) in high-poverty and high-needs schools.

An overwhelming consensus of recent school finance research has demonstrated that increased investment in high-poverty schools can have a substantial positive impact on student learning outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Fillegas & Davis, 2008  
<sup>11</sup> Pitts, 2007

<sup>12</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017  
<sup>13</sup> Van Roekel, 2008

<sup>14</sup> Bryan & Henry, 2012

<sup>15</sup> Gross, 2015

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/08/13/21055545/4-new-studies-bolster-the-case-more-money-for-schools-helps-low-income-students>

# DECREASE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

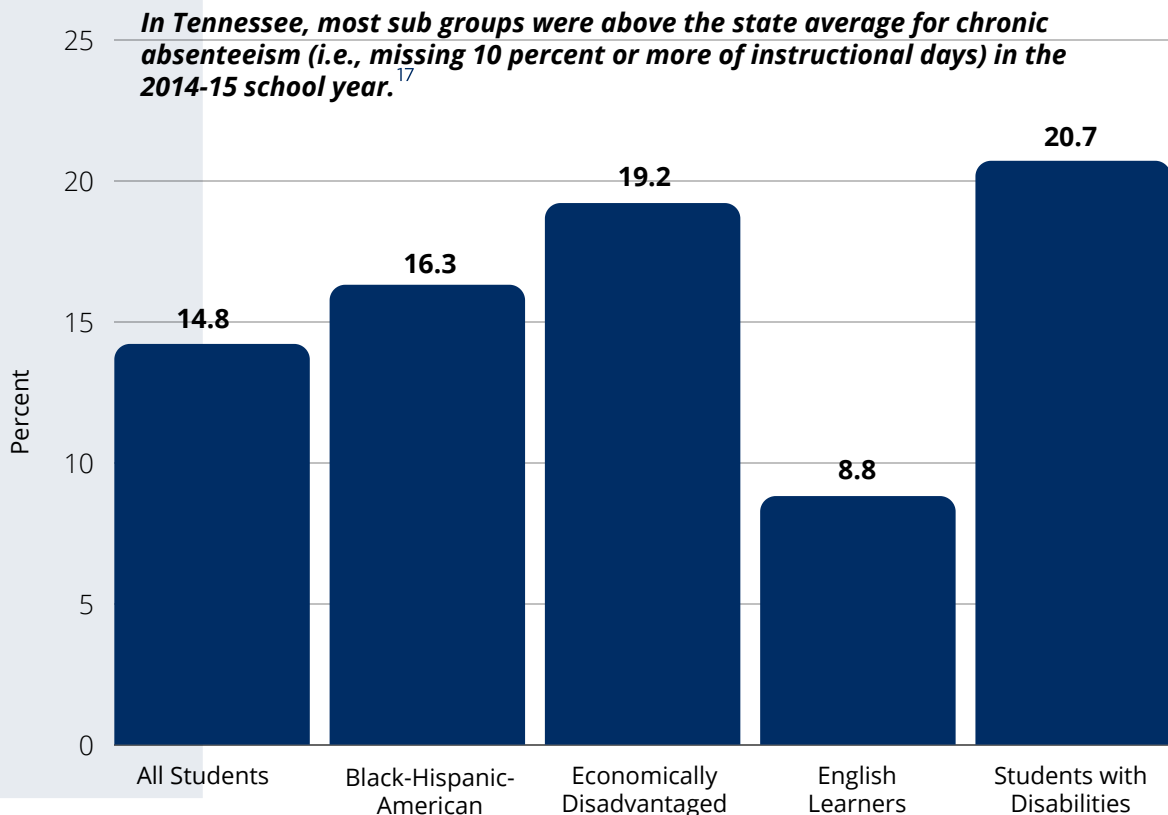
With attendance data, leaders take action to minimize attendance barriers for all families and maximize learning time for all students.

## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

At-risk families value school less and therefore do not believe in the importance of regular attendance.

## EQUITY MINDSET

As leaders, we must believe, individually and collectively, that all of our families value the importance of their children's education and understand they can experience conditions that negatively impact regular attendance.



<sup>17</sup>Tennessee Department of Education's ESSA Plan, p. 168. [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/documents/TN\\_ESSA\\_State\\_Plan\\_Approved.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/documents/TN_ESSA_State_Plan_Approved.pdf)



# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for decreasing chronic absenteeism



### School Leader Actions

- Create a school-wide plan to partner with families and communities to understand attendance barriers and to create potential solutions together
- Establish a school-wide system for early identification and prevention of above average absenteeism
- Establish and reinforce an inclusive school culture that creates safety and support for all students, for example:
  - Train educators and staff on bullying prevention
  - Provide access to clean clothes for students who need them
  - Provide educators and staff with professional learning focused on cultural awareness of religious, ethnic, and dietary diversity
- Maximize teacher evaluation systems to ensure teachers understand the rubric and its relationship to student engagement
- Use social media blitzes and other activities to recognize classes and even individuals with excellent or perfect attendance
- Replace suspensions for minor offenses with positive behavioral support for students



### District Leader Actions

- Partner with educator preparation providers (EPPs) to ensure teacher candidates learn strategies for reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism and engaging families in multiple ways
- Provide training to all principals to develop effective monitoring systems and targeted prevention and intervention strategies including RTI2
- Use district-wide attendance data to target support for schools with high rates of absenteeism
- Collect and monitor data on student absences longitudinally, and review attendance data at regularly scheduled intervals
- Support attendance efforts by allocating resources and personnel for wraparound supports
- Partner with law enforcement agencies to develop community policing models
- Advocate for public transportation and public health options including partnering with health departments and local providers to bring resources to the community, such as encouraging satellite medical clinics in schools
- Offer training for certified officials and those who communicate with parents about using positive language which increases their support for students and families rather than using approaches that might make parents feel reprimanded and guilty when their child is absent
- Promote understanding of truancy vs. chronic absenteeism, share practices that work, integrate attendance efforts systemically throughout the district, and provide meaningful outreach to parents when students are identified as chronically absent

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for decreasing chronic absenteeism



### School Board Actions

- Regularly review local absenteeism data with the superintendent, establish clear goals to address chronic absenteeism, and develop and monitor a strategy for improving chronic absenteeism
- Ensure board policy is definitive about district expectations and builds in accountability structures at all levels: student, parent, school, and local courts
- Direct appropriate funding to support evidence-based resources, including
  - support personnel (e.g., school counselors)
  - school-based initiatives (e.g., family resource centers)
  - community partnerships (e.g., mental health services)



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Embrace high standards, rigor and high expectations for each student in preparation for post-secondary opportunities
- Provide students access to grade level content and high-quality aligned curricula and materials
- Expose PreK-12 students to early post-secondary opportunities by assisting them to attend college and career fairs and participate in college campus visits
- Invite post-secondary faculty and students to visit your classroom / school, representing diverse cultural and educational experiences
- Affirm career interests by encouraging work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships and virtual opportunities
- Work with local businesses and city and county government to create summer internship initiatives for students to explore different career paths
- Establish post-secondary preparation perspectives and systems starting at elementary school through high school so students own their college or career paths
- Secure training and/or certification in order to offer instruction in early post-secondary opportunities such as dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Explore with your child his or her interests, strengths, and potential aspirations
- Engage in early and frequent conversations with your child about job interests and post-secondary opportunities
- Collaborate with your child to utilize resources (e.g., school counselor, websites, college fairs) to seek information on college, career, and life opportunities
- Encourage your child to participate in job shadowing, summer internships and/or work-based learning
- Explore dual enrollment and dual credit classes

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for decreasing chronic absenteeism



### Community Actions

- Communicate with families (especially those of prospective first-generation college students) about the importance of postsecondary, types of postsecondary institutions, current EPSOs, and available financial supports
- Establish strong relationships between districts and local industry to create kindergarten- to-job (K-J) pathways aligned to local workforce needs
- Align service learning requirements to the requirements of state-level scholarship opportunities (e.g., TNAchieves)
- Encourage community members and partners to offer tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment opportunities for all students at no cost
- Create a forum to strengthen partnerships between postsecondary institutions and districts

# REDUCE DISPROPORTIONATE OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION RATES

Leaders take action to minimize exclusionary and inconsistent disciplinary methods to maximize learning time for all students.

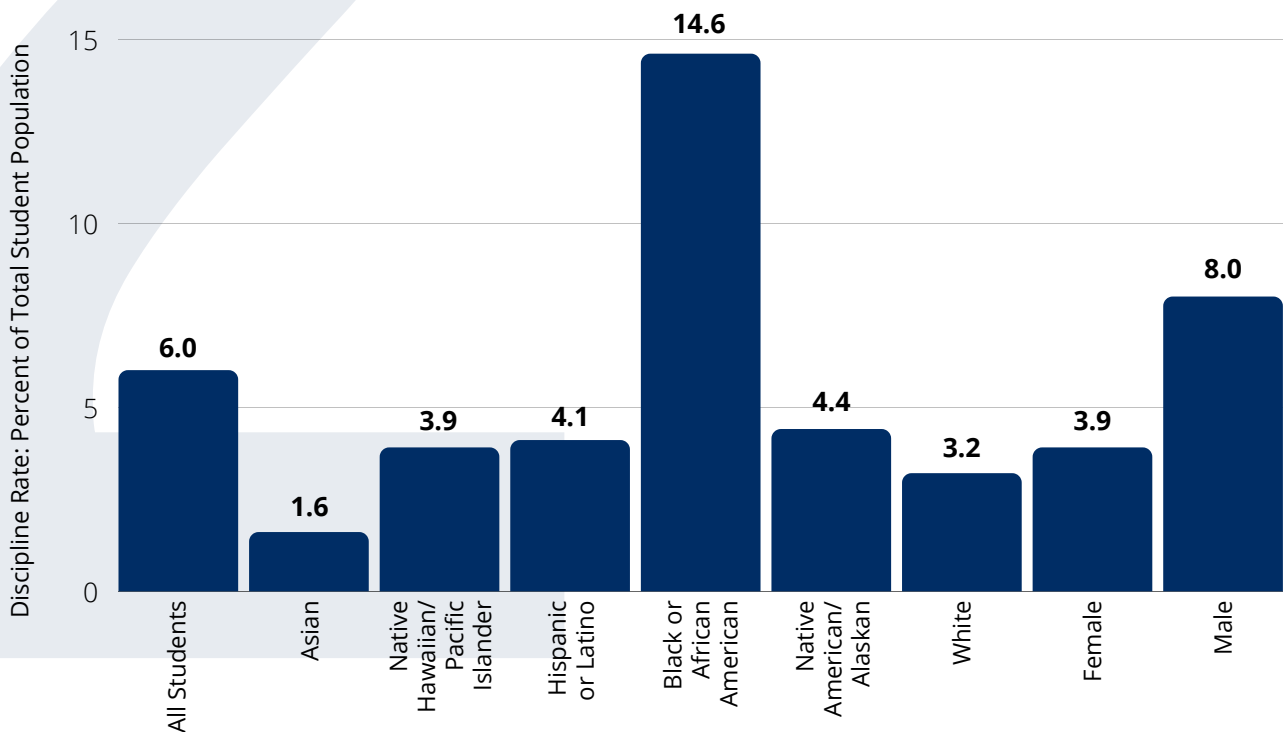
## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

At-risk students have less structure and consistency outside of school and therefore need more exclusionary discipline measures to instill the value of respect for authority.

## EQUITY MINDSET

As leaders, we believe and acknowledge, individually and collectively, that the lived experiences of many families differ and understand those differences do not equate to student deficiencies.

*In Tennessee, Black or African-American students were suspended at more than double the state average in the 2016-17 school year.<sup>18</sup>*



<sup>18</sup> Tennessee State Report Card, Education Climate. <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/report-card.html>

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# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for reducing disproportionate out-of-school suspension and expulsion rates



### School Leader Actions

- Train educators on restorative practices and align school policies to improve climate and culture
- Utilize School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- Apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations capably
- Utilize the Tennessee Department of Education's [toolkit](#) and [resource guide](#) for integrating social and personal supports into the classroom and school building
- Train educators on implicit and explicit bias to reduce disparities in the issuance of punitive discipline
- Develop a communication plan for addressing ways in which families and the community receive information about school and district policies, ensuring information is available to families in multiple languages and formats
- Maximize the teacher evaluation process to ensure teachers understand the connection between the classroom environment and student engagement
- Create a brief list of guiding questions or prompts that parents can ask concerning academics and student behavior



### District Leader Actions

- Integrate recommendations from the district-wide task force into school improvement plans
- Review suspensions with school leaders as part of annual principal evaluations
- Develop district strategy on evidence-based methods of positive school discipline and train school leaders on implementing new practices
- Provide district-wide training on culturally responsive pedagogical practices to address disproportionate suspension rates and focus on strategies, such as home visits or increasing family-school staff connections and relationships, which have been shown to reduce disparities in the issuance of punitive discipline
- Review district curricula to assess the integration of social and personal learning strategies and culturally relevant instruction as tools for students and staff to promote safe and positive learning communities
- Foster collaboration among district administrative teams to calibrate around discipline for consistency
- Hold alternative schools accountable for academic outcomes
- Provide additional staffing allocations for schools with historical data suggesting long term discipline issues that focus on behavior support, mental health services, and parent engagement

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for reducing disproportionate out-of-school suspension and expulsion rates



### School Board Actions

- Establish a clear vision of behavior expectations for all schools
- Use disaggregated data on suspensions and expulsions to review district policies and consider how it should influence the district strategic plan
- Convene a district-wide task force to examine district- and school-wide data, and develop recommendations for improving district disciplinary practices and policies
- Ensure the superintendents and principals implement discipline policies fairly and consistently (e.g., by providing training for educators and families)



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Learn productive and effective classroom management strategies to engage with and redirect students, to include allowing a reset once the consequence has been served
- Be fully present, engaged, and focused on your students
- Implement (additional) effective classroom management strategies that are culturally sensitive and trauma informed
- Seek to address root causes of inappropriate behavior
- Understand and utilize restorative practices and positive interventions
- Engage colleagues and entire staff in data-informed conversations about reducing out-of-school suspensions and expulsions



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Understand and reinforce restorative disciplinary practices and policies and advocate for consistent execution as well as alternative disciplinary practices
- Encourage your child to be involved in their school and community beyond the classroom (e.g., extra-curricular activities, volunteer opportunities, etc.)
- Attend any information sessions or tutorials offered on positive behavior strategies
- Develop a relationship and open lines of communication with your child's teacher(s) so that educators have greater knowledge of the student's background and context
- Advocate for ongoing support and training for educators in understanding diverse student needs



### Community Actions

- Work with community organizations to provide services and supports for students aligned with positive school learning goals
- Engage community organizations to conduct family training on how to teach and reinforce positive behavior
- Develop Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for local media outlets to encourage compliance with behavior and academic expectations

# INCREASE EARLY POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES

Leaders take action to increase access to relevant early postsecondary opportunities for all students so that all of our youth will graduate high school on a path to completing a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree.

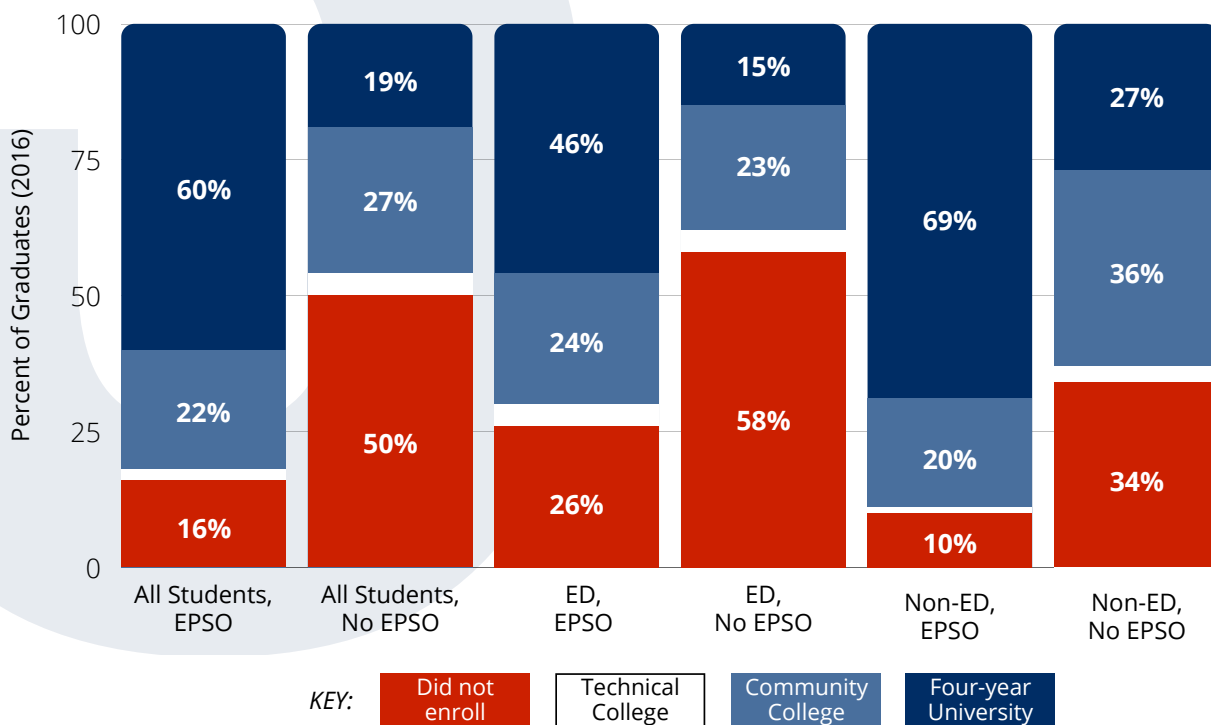
## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Early postsecondary coursework is only for select students who want to continue on to college. For other students, especially those who are disadvantaged, finishing high school is the best we can hope for.

## EQUITY MINDSET

As leaders, we believe, individually and collectively, that all students can acquire the knowledge, abilities, and habits to be successful in postsecondary education and careers of their choosing.

*In Tennessee, economically disadvantaged students who did not attempt an EPSO were more than twice as likely not to enroll in any postsecondary programs in 2016.*<sup>19</sup>



<sup>19</sup>Drive to 55 Pathways to Postsecondary Report, 2016. [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/ccte\\_drive\\_to\\_55\\_report\\_state.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/ccte_drive_to_55_report_state.pdf)

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for increasing early postsecondary opportunities



### School Leader Actions

- Using the [Early Postsecondary Opportunity \(EPSO\) Implementation Guide](#) as a starting point, review current early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs) and student enrollment: which courses and how many sections are currently being offered? How many educators are teaching early postsecondary courses? How many students (including demographic characteristics) are enrolled in each course?
- Ensure that school counselors and master schedulers know and understand protocols so that students have access to multiple and aligned EPSOs and check for conflicts that inadvertently limit participation in multiple EPSOs
- Ensure that students from all demographic groups and levels of academic achievement are properly advised on clearly defined course progressions (pathways) that include EPSOs in different subject areas (Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways, mathematics, science, English, social studies, etc.)
- Set high expectations among instructional and non-instructional staff (e.g., school counselors) that information regarding pathways should be communicated clearly and regularly with all students and families
- Ensure alignment in the curricula of high school courses and postsecondary dual-credit courses



### District Leader Actions

- Support robust data systems that give principals access to data to inform student placement in EPSOs
- Provide incentives and supports for teachers to acquire credentials to teach dual enrollment courses (e.g., completing master's coursework in content area)
- For students with severe disabilities, partner with local education and industry partners to identify appropriate transition programs, work-based learning opportunities (such as a school-based enterprise), and other programs that expand postsecondary pathways
- Devote resources and professional development to the middle to high school transition to ensure alignment of course offerings, strong student advisement, and clarity regarding the opportunities and requirements to pursue specific pathways
- Offer Algebra I in 8th grade and/or provide an accelerated learning path for students to access additional math courses in high school
- Pursue agreements with local postsecondary institutions to establish articulation agreements for local dual credit, dual enrollment, and early and middle college programs
- Ensure that elementary and middle school leaders understand the importance of EPSOs and the impact that K-8 can have in reaching the EPSO goals in high school



# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for increasing early postsecondary opportunities



### School Board Actions

- Consider including persistence in postsecondary as a measure of student success in lieu of enrollment in postsecondary
- Analyze current funding options for EPSOs and determine ways to direct appropriate and equitable funding to support student and educator needs in EPSOs
- Create local board policy requiring student completion of EPSO coursework and incorporate equitable access to these courses into superintendents' performance management framework



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

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- Provide students access to grade level content and high-quality aligned curricula and materials
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# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for increasing early postsecondary opportunities



### Community Actions

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- Encourage community members and partners to offer tutoring, mentoring, and enrichment opportunities for all students at no cost
- Create a forum to strengthen partnerships between postsecondary institutions and districts

# PROVIDE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Leaders take action to minimize effective teaching gaps and to ensure that students with greatest needs have access to highly effective teachers.

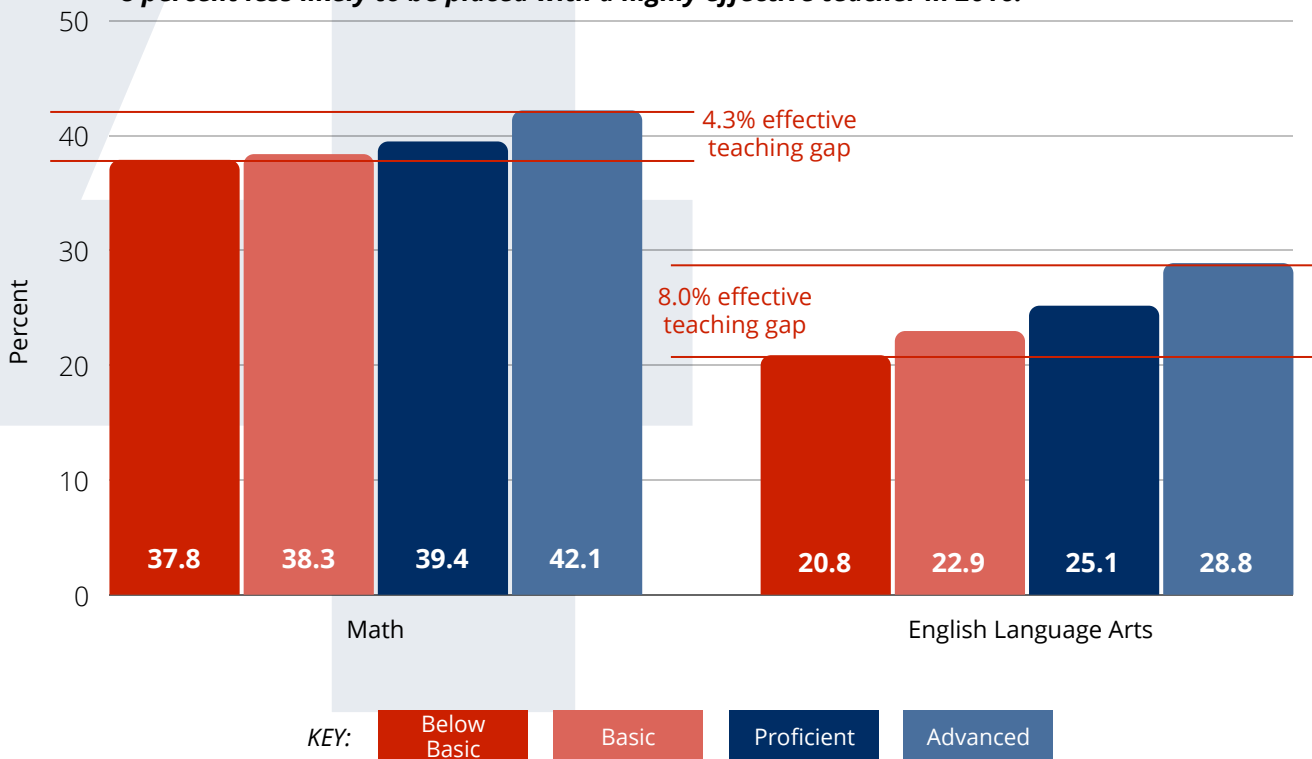
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Teachers are all equally equipped and trained to be effective with all students, regardless of their evaluation outcomes.

## EQUITY MINDSET

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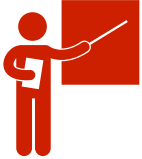
*In Tennessee, 4-8 grade students below proficiency in English Language Arts were 8 percent less likely to be placed with a highly effective teacher in 2016.<sup>20</sup>*



<sup>20</sup> 2016 Tennessee Human Capital Data Report.

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for providing equitable access to effective teachers



### School Leader Actions

- Analyze multi-year data to develop strategies for recruiting and hiring highly effective teachers in the most high-need grades/areas of the school
- Use human capital data (preferably multi-year trend data) to assist with student-teacher placements, specifically by using data to schedule highly effective teachers with the lowest performing students
- Create strong professional learning plans to address the needs of struggling teachers
- Develop a new teacher support program to provide needed support to induct and retain highly effective teachers in high-need schools and classrooms
- Utilize TVAAS and observation data with teacher evaluation conferences and consider strategies to improve learning gains for struggling students
- Integrate effective teaching gap (ETG) goals into the school improvement plan and report annually on human capital data to measure improvements
- Implement training and expectations for teachers on effectively communicating student progress with parents (i.e. keeping grades current/updated with an appropriate number of grades, more detailed Open-House and Parent-Teacher Conferences, multiple communication sources)



### District Leader Actions

- Review the annual human capital data, and develop strategies to recruit and place highly effective teachers in the schools, grades, and content areas most in need
- Examine other barriers (e.g., school conditions, school leadership, etc.) to attracting highly qualified teachers to the most high-need schools, and develop a plan for removing barriers identified
- Utilize the human capital data during evaluation conferences with school administrators to inform school improving planning and evaluation outcomes
- Train school leaders and interview teams in selection and hiring practices to reduce bias and increase the use of skill demonstration and evidenced based practices in the interview process
- Develop or strengthen partnerships with primary EPPs that include sharing data on performance and teacher effectiveness, student placement needs, etc.
- Partner with EPPs to train preservice teachers effectively and build their skill sets around equity, cultural competence, and RTI2
- Provide ongoing training and support for all teachers in cultural competence and working with diverse student populations

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for providing equitable access to effective teachers



### School Board Actions

- Prioritize providing equitable learning opportunities for all students, and direct appropriate funding support to strategies that assure the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers and the assignment of these teachers to high need students
- Ensure the district develops strategies to incentivize and recognize highly effective teachers who work in high-need schools
- Provide equitable funding to high-need schools to ensure staffing of highly effective teachers and support (e.g., mentor/coach) for beginning teachers



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Enthusiastically embrace teaching all students of all achievement levels, socioeconomic status, ethnicities, cultures, languages and nationalities
- Understand your own knowledge gaps, and any potential misconceptions or biases about the students and families served
- Hold yourself and your peers accountable for being reflective and growth oriented
- Engage and embrace peer-to-peer feedback/ observation cycles within the building and partnering with other schools to learn from other educators
- Participate in cultural competency and trauma-informed training to better understand your students and families
- Seek opportunities to engage in ongoing professional learning to refine teaching and learning practices



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Advocate for your child's unique learning needs
- Connect with your child's teacher by frequent communication via multiple modalities (e.g., face-to-face, classroom opportunities, email, conference calls, parent portal)
- Insist that an effective teacher is assigned to your child's classroom



### Community Actions

- Partner with district and school leaders to recruit more effective teachers to fill hard to staff schools or subjects
- Celebrate and affirm the teaching profession
- Expect excellence from all classroom educators
- Advocate for teachers and principals needs at the local and state levels

# RECRUIT AND RETAIN A DIVERSE TEACHING FORCE

Leaders take action to recruit and retain a diverse teaching force and develop educator excellence and capacity.

## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

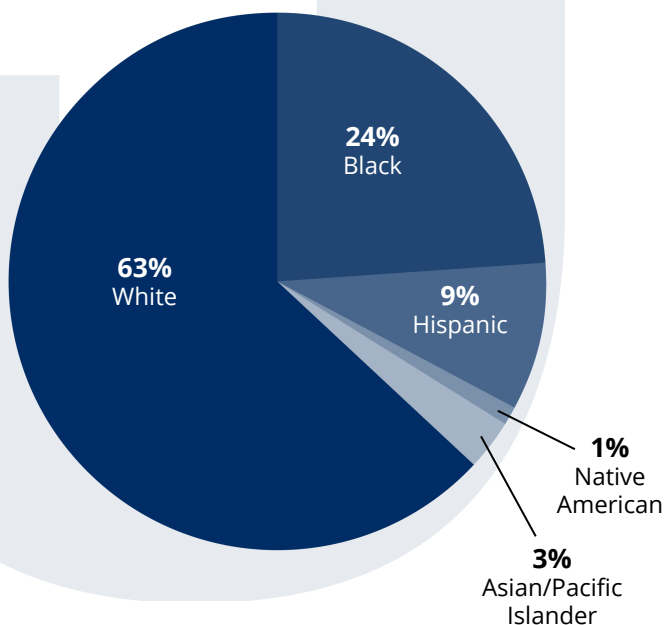
Teachers are all equally equipped and trained to be effective with all students, regardless of demographic background and lived experience.

## EQUITY MINDSET

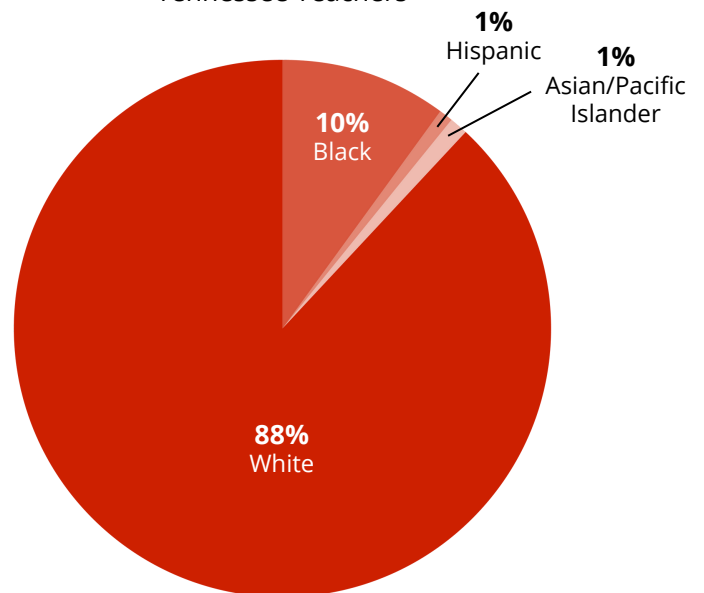
As leaders, we acknowledge that students benefit from seeing teachers and mentors who reflect the diversity of our schools, and we address implicit bias when hiring, assigning, developing, and retaining teachers of color.

***In Tennessee, Black Students represented 24 percent of the total student population, but only 10 percent of the total teacher population was Black in 2015-16.<sup>21</sup>***

Tennessee Students



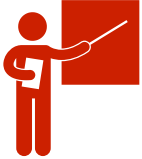
Tennessee Teachers



<sup>21</sup> Goldstein, Lila K.S. *Diversity of Students' Teachers and Classmates*. PowerPoint. March 21, 2017.

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching force



### School Leader Actions

- Collaborate with human resource staff to ensure a diverse pool of candidates who match with school needs
- Ensure that recruitment and selection processes include diverse representation from the school community
- Identify potential teacher candidates (e.g., teaching assistants, parent/family mentors, volunteers) to recruit into educator preparation programs (EPPs)
- Provide and monitor induction/mentoring support to new teachers of color
- Provide high-quality school leadership opportunities for teachers of color



### District Leader Actions

- Develop a targeted recruitment strategy to attract teachers of color (e.g., incentives, job fairs, social media, etc.)
- Plan intensive induction and support strategies for early career teachers
- Develop strategies to increase the number of principals of color, which research suggests can lead to an increase in teachers of color
- Train school leaders and interview teams in selection and hiring practices to reduce unconscious bias and prioritize hiring a workforce that resembles the student body
- Pursue and develop strong partnerships with EPPs and community colleges focused on building a pipeline of diverse educators and leaders
- Allocate funds to support programs, resources, and training for prospective, aspiring, and current teachers of color (e.g., Praxis preparation, scholarships, etc.)
- Build a "grow your own" program to cultivate a pipeline of future educators from the current middle and high school student population (e.g., start student clubs or organizations, expand EPSOs in high schools, etc.)
- Monitor data on new diverse hires to look for trends in staffing, placement, school conditions, and outcomes to avoid early burnout and attrition
- Advocate for licensure reciprocity for out-of-state applicants to work and learn
- Develop training or certificate programming to attract community members to become paraprofessionals or teacher assistants



### School Board Actions

- Prioritize recruitment and retention efforts for more diverse teachers and appropriate funding support to targeted strategies
- Fund scholarships for district students going into teaching contingent on their service to the district
- Provide funding for incentives like subsidized housing and car loan assistance to encourage teachers to relocate

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching force



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Be an ambassador for your school and the profession as a welcoming and thriving place for people of all backgrounds to work and learn
- Support new and innovative models of educator preparation (e.g., job-embedded licensure, teacher residencies, and multi-classroom leader) to encourage students and paraprofessionals from historically underrepresented groups to become teachers
- Articulate a common purpose and inclusive vision which promotes a welcoming, engaging, and optimistic environment for people of all backgrounds
- Develop relationships with communities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to recruit a diverse faculty
- Support administrative and teacher leadership career pathways for historically underrepresented groups



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Affirm the profession of teaching and encourage potential teacher candidates to enroll in Educator Preparation Programs
- Contribute to the teaching profession's positive environment and culture by sharing compelling stories about teachers (i.e. positive impact of teacher on your child's life)
- Seek opportunities to share your strengths and skills and/or experiences (i.e., trades, language, and other skills) with your child's school
- Proactively develop positive working relationships with your child's teacher(s), specifically in environments where racial and cultural isolation may exist



### Community Actions

- Partner with EPPs to identify potential candidates for referral
- Increase awareness of the importance of a diverse teacher workforce and the opportunities available in school districts
- Create a pool of scholarships for the Praxis and support preparation for the Praxis
- Work with EPPs to proactively recruit, enroll, support, train, and graduate a diverse pool of aspiring educators



# EMBED CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ALL ASPECTS OF SCHOOL PRACTICES

Leaders take action to create safe, supportive, inclusive school cultures that use culturally relevant practices.

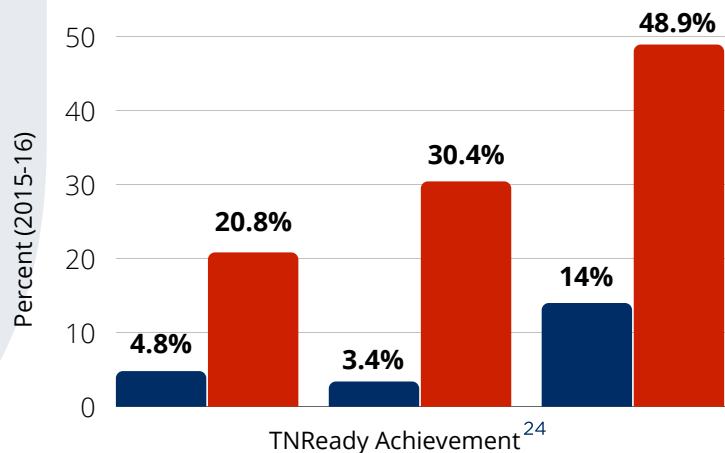
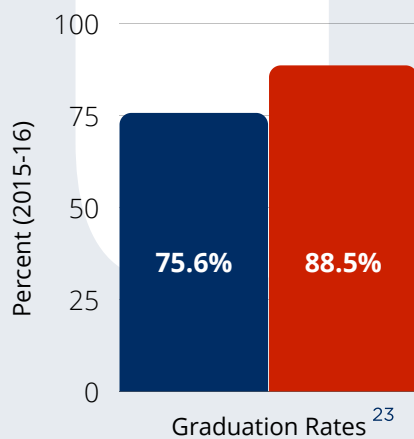
## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Racial and cultural identity does not impact the perceptions, beliefs, and actions of our students and educators.

## EQUITY MINDSET

As leaders, we acknowledge and celebrate the importance, value, and strength of our students' and educators' racial, cultural, and other identities, and work to eliminate personal and institutional biases and barriers, and embrace diversity.

*In Tennessee, 56,528 students are English Learners. Only 14 percent of high school English Learners were proficient or advanced in science as compared to 48.9 percent of all students in 2016.*<sup>22</sup>



KEY: English Learners (EL) All Students

<sup>22</sup> English Learners in Tennessee, TN Educational Equity Coalition. [http://tnedequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ESSA-English-Learners-4-pg-booklet\\_V8.pdf](http://tnedequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ESSA-English-Learners-4-pg-booklet_V8.pdf)  
<sup>23</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>24</sup> This graph demonstrates the percent of high school students scoring proficient or advanced on 2016 TNReady assessments. Ibid.

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for embedding cultural competence in all aspects of school practices



### School Leader Actions

- Assess new teachers and staff on dispositions in recruitment and selection process; place teachers and leaders in environment of best fit based on dispositions
- Engage with families, communities, and agencies as partners in the education of all students
- Provide training in developing cultural competence among district staff, and formalize opportunities for teachers to participate in self-assessments and cultural learning
- Train educators and other staff in cultural competence and create formal opportunities for continuing dialogue and practice in cultural learning and awareness building
- Maximize teacher evaluation to ensure teachers deeply understand good instructional practice and its relationship to student engagement (refer to indicators: Teacher Knowledge of Students, Motivating Students, Expectations, and Managing Student Behaviors)



### District Leader Actions

- Engage with key stakeholders through surveys and focus groups to garner feedback on the district's cultural environment
- Develop a system-wide definition of equity and update the district strategic plan to embed a theory of action and specific milestones and benchmarks related to academic performance and human capital management
- Allocate funding to train and provide ongoing support to all leaders and teachers in cultural competence and working with diverse student populations
- Create high-quality, culturally responsive curricula that includes high-level reading, writing, and math and the opportunity for students to see themselves and other cultures in the curricula
- Use a cultural audit to examine school and classroom culture/environment as well as instructional strategies
- Examine promotion practices to ensure that teachers of color are being developed and considered for leadership opportunities
- Build and use a cultural competence aptitude screener in the HR process
- Fund at least one full-time English language teacher in districts serving high EL populations

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for embedding cultural competence in all aspects of school practices



### School Board Actions

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment in the form of a community survey prior to development of goals and objectives around cultural competence
- Develop goal statements internally, then seek community input
- Establish a citizen's advisory committee on long-range planning
- Publicize the main elements of the plan through the school district newsletter and/or community newspaper with an invitation for written response from individuals and organizations
- Annually train the board members in cultural competence with a focus on bias



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Proactively seek out cultural competence training and focus on understanding implicit bias and how it might influence the classroom environment
- Authentically engage in professional conversations with peers regarding culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, instruction as well as materials and resources
- Create opportunities for all students through goal setting and social and emotional development
- Utilize cultural competency skills to better understand student needs and behaviors to create a culture of inclusion and success



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Participate through surveys and focus groups to share feedback on the school's cultural environment
- Participate in Family and Community Councils to bring your unique background, perspective and lived experience to the conversation around effective education
- Engage in a shared partnership with the school as a volunteer to utilize cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills to enhance the education of children
- Provide feedback to the school about diversity within literature, projects, history, and programming



### Community Actions

- Utilize bilingual liaisons and community leaders, both formal and informal, to create cultural bridges between the school and the community
- Develop advisory councils or parent/family groups within schools
- Develop a calendar of events or programs tied to curricular themes and events in the school
- Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) should be leveraged as important partners with potential knowledge, capacity, and resources related to equity generally, and cultural competence more specifically

# PARTNER WITH COMMUNITY ALLIES

Leaders take action to build results-focused partnerships with the community.

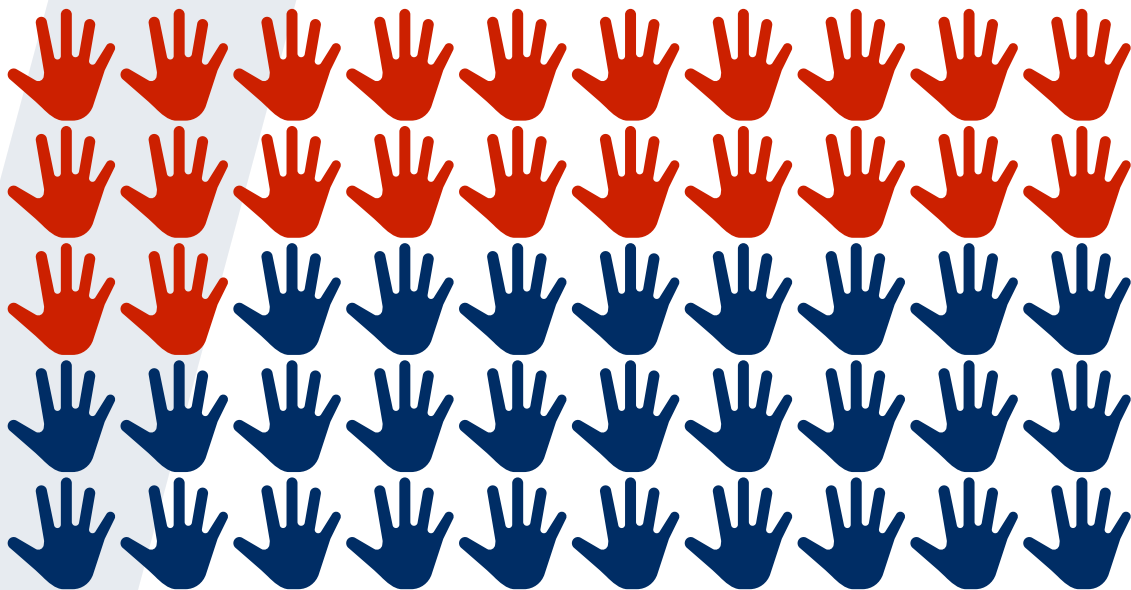
## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Community partners exist to help with fundraising and carry out school funding needs.

## EQUITY MINDSET

As leaders, we believe community partnerships are stronger and more effective when, as allies, they serve a common vision, utilize the full range of assets of both partners, and provide mutually beneficial resources to improve the school community.

*The Tennessee Promise scholarship program provides students with two years of tuition-free attendance at a community or technical college in Tennessee.<sup>25</sup> Almost half of the first TNPromise class dropped out of college without a degree in 2017.<sup>26</sup>*



<sup>25</sup> Tennessee Promise. <http://tnpromise.gov/>  
<sup>26</sup> Tennessean. "Tennessee Promise students more likely to succeed in college, less likely to drop out, new data shows," Sept. 21, 2017. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2017/09/21/tennessee-promise-students-more-likely-succeed-college-less-likely-drop-out-new-data-shows/690091001/>

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for partnering with community allies



### School Leader Actions

- Clearly articulate the school's belief and commitment to providing equity for all students
- Identify community organizations to assist with school improvement plans (e.g., mental health supports)
- Prioritize community partnerships by hiring a community coordinator and including community representatives in all school planning efforts
- Develop a school-wide equity advisory council made up of key community allies
- Engage with key stakeholders, through surveys and focus groups, to identify community partners and resources that can assist the school with the student needs
- Engage community allies to develop strategies to share key school and district initiatives to create greater buy-in and support within the community
- Ensure that teachers and staff provide engaging learning experiences connected to the local community context and leverage civic and service-learning opportunities and partnerships
- Encourage school personnel to reach out to the community (ex: school counselor, principal, district leaders), clearly define and communicate points of contact for various issues, and allow time for these communications and connections to occur.



### District Leader Actions

- Clearly articulate the district's belief and commitment to providing equity for all students
- Allocate resources equitably and transparently to support the success of all students
- Ensure equitable access to community learning opportunities
- Engage with key stakeholders, through surveys and focus groups, to identify community partners and resources that can assist the district with student needs
- Explicitly design mutually beneficial goals and outcomes to enhance commitment and alignment of roles, scope, and resource sharing among community partners
- Partner with key community allies to communicate about key district equity initiatives to create greater buy-in and support within the community



### School Board Actions

- Clearly articulate the board's beliefs and commitment to providing equity for all students
- Develop a strategic plan that invites input from community groups reflecting the diversity of the community and includes a variety of feedback mechanisms such as open forums
- Invite community voice regarding long-range strategic planning (e.g., form a citizen's advisory committee)
- Broadly communicate relevant board information to community stakeholders (e.g., social media, district newsletter, community newspaper)

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for partnering with community allies



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Be actively involved with community organizations and school partnerships
- Invite individuals from community organizations to participate in school activities, visit classrooms, and work with schools
- Actively partner with and support non-profit organizations focused on educational equity, opportunity and diversity



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Participate in and support community organizations that are focused on educational equity
- Share information about your child's school to foster a better community understanding of the local educational context
- Proactively seek opportunities for community-school partnerships



### Community Actions

- Provide feedback and articulate expectations for districts and schools to provide equitable opportunities for all students
- Partner with school and district leaders to create a joint plan around equity
- Advocate for equitable allocation of resources for all students in the district
- Monitor the equitable distribution of resources
- Educator preparation programs (EPPs) should be leveraged as important partners with potential knowledge, capacity, and resources related to equity generally, and cultural competence more specifically

# ALLOCATE RESOURCES EQUITABLY

Leaders take action to allocate resources equitably by selecting and implementing high quality instructional materials, leveraging technology tools, and differentiating fiscal resources.

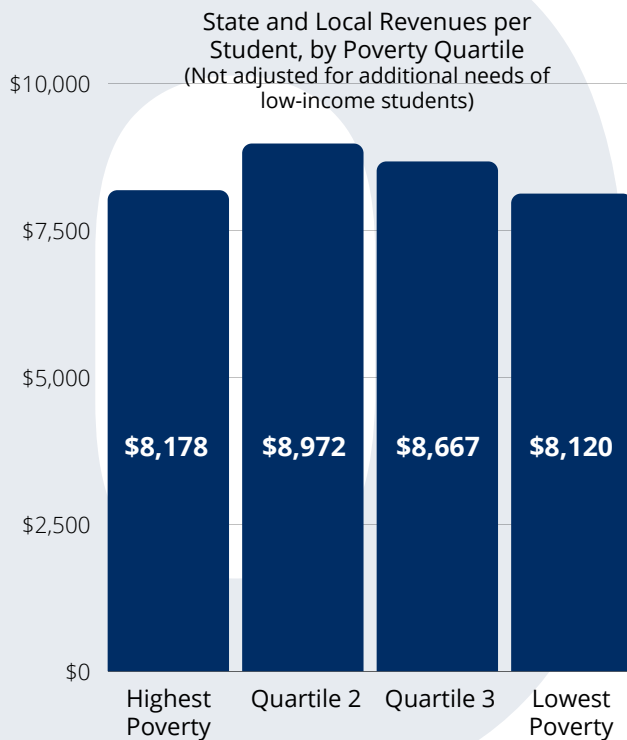
## COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Providing equal general fund dollars for high-poverty and low-poverty schools is reasonable because Federal Title I funding is meant to address poverty in education.

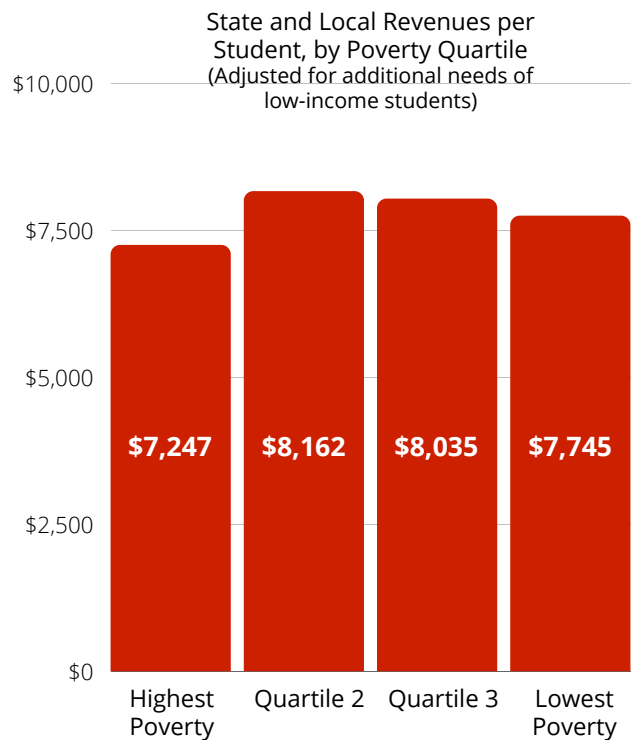
## EQUITY MINDSET

In order to provide equity of educational opportunity and address student need, all revenues for public education should be allocated with an equity perspective. To achieve similar learning outcomes for all students, we must invest more from all funding sources (not just Title I) in high-poverty and high-needs schools.

***In Tennessee, per pupil state and local revenues in the highest poverty school districts are roughly equal to or less than per pupil revenues in lower poverty districts.<sup>27</sup>***



*The highest poverty districts receive \$58 (or 1%) more per student than the lowest poverty districts*



*Adjusting for the needs of low-income students, the highest poverty districts receive \$498 (or 6%) less per student than the lowest poverty districts*

<sup>27</sup> Education Trust, 2017.

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for allocating resources equitably



### School Leader Actions

- Make all school resource decisions with a focus on educational equity
- Engage with key stakeholders to identify community partners and resources that can assist the school with the student needs
- Provide professional learning and development related to the decisions that are being made with the curriculum, pedagogy, instructional materials, and resources
- Participate in focused conversations around resources and provide feedback to the district and state
- Advocate for inclusive curriculum that promotes student agency, and reflects and represents all students that are being served
- Ensure access to technology and connectivity for all students
- Equip staff, students and families with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate instructional platforms and systems; leverage educator strengths to build staff capacity
- Progress monitor technology use and access, as well as student engagement and instructional delivery
- Engage in ongoing professional learning and awareness related to institutionalized and embedded bias in order to drive equity-rooted resource decisions



### District Leader Actions

- Fiscal Resources
  - Allocate all financial resources equitably to support the success of all students
  - Engage with stakeholders to garner input regarding the equitable allocation of resources to meet student and school needs
  - Explore and adopt specific budget allocation methodologies (e.g. weighted student funding) that explicitly incorporate equity and student need into the budget development process
- Technology
  - Ensure that all students have adequate technology (laptop, internet access, educational software) to access a broad range of educational opportunities
  - Ensure that all students have access to technology and an educator who appropriately utilizes instructional technology so that they might be competitive in today's world
  - Invest in technology hardware, access, and professional development for teachers to build their capacity to utilize technology resources and platforms effectively
- High Quality Instructional Materials
  - Ensure that all students have access to high quality instructional materials that are evidence based, standards aligned, and culturally relevant
  - Invest in professional learning opportunities for teachers to be able to use high quality instructional materials effectively to support the education of all children



# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for allocating resources equitably



### School Board Actions

- Support the effective implementation of high quality evidenced-based instructional resources
- Ensure that board adopts an equity policy that includes clear language regarding equitable allocation of resources
- Approve a school district budget that prioritizes the educational and non-academic needs of all students
- Allocate funding for the recruitment, retention and compensation of exemplary talent to support the district's highest need students
- Adjust resource allocation based on identified deficit areas surfaced in a periodic review of the impact of the equity policy



### Teacher/Teacher Leader Actions

- Fiscal Resources
  - Advocate for initial and ongoing training to effectively leverage adopted materials & instructional materials
  - Advocate for curriculum that provides a common language and does not exacerbate knowledge gaps or differences based on context and lived experience
  - Utilize grade-appropriate curriculum and materials adopted by district
  - Provide consistent opportunities to work on grade-appropriate and challenging assignments
  - Authentically engage in professional conversations with peers regarding culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, instruction and materials/resources
- Technology
  - Advocate for professional learning to effectively leverage classroom technology
  - Provide actively engaging lessons that utilize educational technology effectively and are developmentally appropriate
  - Utilize virtual platforms to build and nurture family and community learning partnerships
  - Create programs that address digital inequity issues within the school
  - Use adaptive technology to enhance learning opportunities for students with disabilities
- High Quality Instructional Materials
  - Advocate for equitable funding that enables all students to succeed
  - Volunteer to serve on the school leadership team, teacher advisory council or other structures where educators can promote equitable use of resources
  - Leverage relationships with community partners to secure resources that enhance equity and student success

# RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## for allocating resources equitably



### Family/Guardian Actions

- Attend and utilize a parent academy or other learning opportunities to better understand instructional materials and build greater capacity to support children with learning at home
- Offer input and feedback regarding instructional materials during the textbook adoption process, and in other formal and informal settings
- Secure access for your child to a technology device and connectivity through home, school, and community resources.
- Communicate and collaborate with your child's school about the opportunities available for their digital learning, including virtual learning.
- Discuss with your child appropriate expectations and etiquette to engage in virtual learning and other digital learning activities.
- Utilize financial workshops, college fairs, and career day programs to learn about funding and financial opportunities for assistance with post-secondary learning.
- Communicate the needs of your child and their school, and what resources might be necessary to address those needs, in a variety of ways
- Advocate for equitable distribution of financial resources in your school district, community, and state



### Community Actions

- Advocate for equitable allocation of financial and other resources in schools and districts, as well as at the state level
- Monitor and review the distribution of resources from an equity perspective
- Advocate for transparency in school, district, and state education-related budgetary decisions, especially around equitable allocation of resources and the impact of funding disaggregated by school, neighborhood, student population characteristics, etc.
- Work with schools to develop partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses to mitigate funding and resource constraints
- Provide teachers and schools with resources to support families in addressing non-instructional needs
- Educator preparation programs (EPPs) should be leveraged as important partners with potential knowledge, capacity, and resources related to equity generally, and cultural competence more specifically

# KEY TERMS

**Chronic absenteeism:** Frequently missing school for any reason (excused, unexcused, suspended/expelled). Commonly defined as missing 10 percent or more of instructional days, the threshold at which research indicates most students are at risk of negative academic and social consequences.

**Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway:** Programs of study in high schools that lead to industry certification or credential.

**Cultural competence:** Various definitions of this term exist,<sup>28</sup> but generally, the ability to function comfortably in cross-cultural settings and to interact harmoniously with people from cultures and races that differ from one's own.<sup>29</sup>

**Early postsecondary opportunity (EPSO):** EPSOs provide students with the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school, develop the confidence and skills necessary for success in postsecondary, make informed postsecondary and career decisions, and decrease the time and cost of completing a certificate of degree. Opportunities that help to support this culture of college and career readiness for all TN students include the following: Advanced Placement, Cambridge, College Level Examination Programs, Dual Enrollment, Industry Certification, International Baccalaureate, Local Dual Credit, and Statewide Dual Credit.

**Educator preparation provider (EPP):** College, university, or other entity that prepares educators. There are 38 EPPs in Tennessee.

**Effective teaching gap (ETG):** The differential access to highly effective teachers that exists between Advanced and Below Basic students. This is calculated as the percent of advanced students with highly effective teachers minus the percent of Below Basic students with highly effective teachers.

**English Learner (EL):** As defined by the US Department of Education, an English Language Learner (ELL) student is defined as an individual enrolled in an elementary or secondary institution who: was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; is a Native American or Alaska Native; comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English proficiency; and/or is migratory and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant.

**Equity:** In the field of education, equity means that every student has access to effective teachers and the resources, experiences, and rigor they need to be successful.

**Equity shifts:** Shifts in mindset and practice that set the foundation for providing and sustaining equitable outcomes for all students. These shifts require acknowledging current, deep-seated mindsets about race and culture.

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):** The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in December 2015, reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Tennessee's ESSA plan can be found at [tinyurl.com/TNESSAPlan](http://tinyurl.com/TNESSAPlan).

**Exclusionary discipline:** The removal of a student from his/her regular academic program for disciplinary purposes.

**Highly effective teacher:** A highly effective teacher has Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) individual growth (one-year) scores of level 4 or 5 on the five-point TVAAS scale.

**Leader for equity:** A leader for equity works to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps and ensure success for all students by identifying and addressing personal and institutional bias and barriers and providing strategies to ensure all students have equitable access to effective educators; rigorous instruction and engaging learning opportunities; social, academic, and community supports; and resources to ensure success.

**Restorative practices:** Restorative practices are processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.<sup>30</sup>

**Results-focused partnership:** Partnerships that make learning the shared responsibility of the school, its families, and its community before, during, and after the typical school day.

**Service learning:** Community engagement that combines learning goals and community service in ways that can enhance both student growth and the common good.<sup>31</sup>

**Truancy:** A legal term that refers only to unexcused absences. A Tennessee student is considered truant at five unexcused absences and may be subject to legal intervention.<sup>32</sup>

**Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS):** TVAAS measures student growth year over year, regardless of whether the student is proficient on the state assessment. In calculating a TVAAS score, a student's performance is compared relative to the performance of his or her peers who have performed similarly on past assessments.

<sup>28</sup> National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University. <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html>

<sup>29</sup> Cultural Competence and Equity, Minneapolis Public Schools. [http://sss.mpls.k12.mn.us/sites/6c9fd336-96c5-451c-a8a6-b6f00373668d/uploads/Section\\_F\\_Cult\\_Comp.pdf](http://sss.mpls.k12.mn.us/sites/6c9fd336-96c5-451c-a8a6-b6f00373668d/uploads/Section_F_Cult_Comp.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> International Institute for Restorative Practices. <https://www.iirp.edu/who-we-are/what-is-restorative-practices>

<sup>31</sup> Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/>

<sup>32</sup> Tennessee Department of Education's Chronically Out of School FAQ. <https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/chronic-absenteeism.html>

# CONSIDERATIONS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook was developed by the Tennessee ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC) working group, comprised of the following members from 2016 through 2021:

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The National Urban League Movement believes deeply and strongly in the opportunities that a high-quality education provides children and youth. In deep partnership with like-minded stakeholders and educators such as those exemplified by the Tennessee Leaders for Equity, we believe that there is more to be gained by working, thinking and learning together. The Movement holds equity and excellence at the heart of our work with, and on behalf of, the students, families and communities that we serve. Progress has been made across multiple indicators, but our work together remains both necessary and timely in light of historic and emergent issues of inequity and to best fulfill the promise of education in the lives of children and students.

**HAL SMITH, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE**

We are grateful for the framework of the Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook which provides strategic planning and resources as we implement and sustain equitable outcomes, as well as engage stakeholders in Shelby County Schools (SCS) and throughout the state. If we truly desire to change the lives of our students, we must change perception and catalyze more meaningful conversations with educators. Through the implementation of our Equity Office, SCS is committed to supporting key priorities to eliminate barriers to equity. We believe that the future of Memphis is defined by the success of students, and that success must come to all – not just some.

**DR. JORIS M. RAY, SUPERINTENDENT, SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS**

The Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook has been an invaluable resource. It offers practical guidance and action steps that can be taken at all levels of the school system and community to ensure educational equity is attained. The playbook supports the efforts of school communities that are committed to ensuring that every child receives access to great teachers, leaders and equitable resources, which are central to improving student achievement and preparing students for success beyond post-secondary. It is focused on closing the opportunity gap for children no matter their socioeconomic standing, race, gender or disability.

**DR. BRYAN JOHNSON, FORMER SUPERINTENDENT, HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOLS**



This publication was developed by the Tennessee ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC) team as part of its participation in this joint initiative of the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), the [Council of the Great City Schools](#), the [National Urban League](#), and [The Wallace Foundation](#) to build the capacity of education leaders to implement supports and interventions to turn around schools most in need of improvement. Special thanks to Ann Clark, Debbie Daniels, Erika Hunt, Jess Wood, and Dan Aladjem for consultation on behalf of the Wallace Foundation.

Working to ensure equity of access for all students takes relentless courage and teamwork. Thanks to the many reviewers of this document, including the Governor's Academy for School Leadership (GASL) 2018 mentors, Tennessee's Transformational Leadership Alliance's principal pipeline programs, Tennessee's Superintendent Study Council executive committee, and the staff at the [Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents](#).

Certainly not least, thank you to Tennessee's teachers, school leaders, district leaders, school board members, parents, and communities that make commitments every day to ensure that every student in every classroom in Tennessee is equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully embark upon their chosen path in life.



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