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## **Comptroller Releases Report on Community Schools in Tennessee**

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) has released a new report examining the community school model in Tennessee. State law required OREA to study the formation and operation of community schools, examine whether community schools have met their educational and community goals, and identify best practices that can be replicated by other school districts and schools. OREA conducted site visits to 17 schools across the state.

Community schools are public elementary or secondary schools that form partnerships with community organizations. These schools have additional staff to meet the educational, physical, and emotional needs of economically disadvantaged students, their families, and the community. Students and families are connected through community schools to a broad range of services, including food and clothing assistance, mental health treatment, academic enrichment, and adult education.

OREA identified at least 100 community schools in the Achievement School District, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Hamilton County Schools, Knox County Schools, and Shelby County Schools. Seven community school providers coordinate services to students and their families in these schools.

The report's key conclusions are:

- Tennessee law outlines parameters for a community school grant program, but no funding has been allocated for the grant, and no other state funding is specifically dedicated for community schools. Community schools combine public funding from local, state, and federal sources with support from private sources to cover their operational costs.
- The lack of a common evaluation framework used by all community schools, the absence of uniform and consistent data, and the variation among the state's community schools in length of operation, goals and priorities, and data tracking prevented OREA from drawing conclusions about whether all community schools in Tennessee have met their educational and community goals.
- Many national studies have found positive effects associated with community schools. More research on community schools is necessary, especially in Tennessee, where many community schools are too early in the implementation phase to fully determine the effects they have on students, families, and communities.

To read the report, please visit OREA's website at: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OREA/>

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