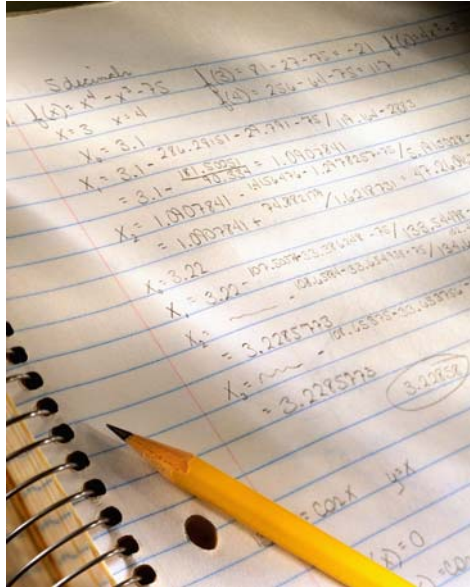


State Approaches to Improving Tennessee's High Priority Schools



December 2006



STATE OF TENNESSEE

COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY

John G. Morgan

Comptroller

STATE CAPITOL

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December 20, 2006

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 study schools and districts that have failed to meet state standards of adequate progress. Every year, the state Department of Education releases a list of high priority schools and districts that are at varying stages of meeting these standards. For the purposes of this report, OEA reviewed schools in the School Improvement 2 category of the state's high priority schools list during the 2004-05 school year, which included 24 schools in five districts. This report reviews state policies that affect high priority schools. In addition, OEA produced district-level reports for each of the five districts.

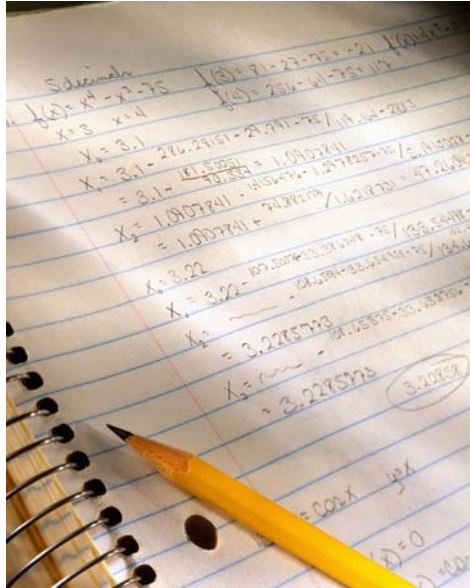
The scope for this study was limited to four education policy areas that impact the quality of instruction and student achievement: goals and governance; teaching quality; student discipline, attendance, and dropout; and instructional support. This report identifies areas for improvement, highlights exceptional and noteworthy practices, and suggests recommendations for improvement.

Sincerely,

John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury

cc: Commissioner Lana Seivers
Department of Education

State Approaches to Improving Tennessee's High Priority Schools



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December 2006

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.
Authorization Number 307341, 400 copies, December 2006. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$2.05 per copy.

Executive Summary

No Child Left Behind has heralded a new era of school, district, and state accountability for student achievement. With the act, each state must report its list of high priority schools and districts – those which have failed to meet achievement gains in specific subjects – each year. In Tennessee, the state reported 159 high priority schools in 2005-06, 24 of which were in their third year of failing to meet state standards. These schools, called Improvement 2 schools, are the focus of this report on the state's actions to improve high priority schools.

Tennessee Code Annotated §49-1-602 requires that the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), in collaboration with the Department of Education, study schools and districts placed on notice. The study concentrated on four education policy areas that impact the quality of instruction and student achievement: goals and governance, teaching quality, student discipline, attendance and dropout, and instructional support. The report defines state-level issues relevant to the schools and districts on notice and highlights exceptional and noteworthy practices in school districts that attempt to address these issues.

The report concludes:

The BEP does not adequately fund the state's urban districts in part because it understates the cost of educating at-risk students and English language learners. These deficiencies of the BEP force some districts to raise substantially more local funds for education.

On average statewide, the BEP generates 75 percent of the state and local revenue contribution. However, the formula generates substantially less state and local revenue for the four urban districts in the state. In 2005, state revenues comprised less than 40 percent of total revenues for the four urban districts, with Davidson County receiving a mere 27.55 percent of total revenue from the state. In addition, the BEP understates the costs to educate at-risk and English language learning students. Administrative and legislative action in 2006 increased the enhanced funding to recognize 38.5 percent of at-risk students and reduced the ratio of ELL students to instructors and translators. The increases, however, still fall short of BEP Review Committee recommendations. (See pages 6-8.)

Because of low family involvement in many schools, the state, districts, and schools are implementing some promising practices to improve family involvement.

Recognizing the importance of family involvement in schools, Tennessee passed legislation in 2004 requiring school districts to develop policies that promote the involvement of parents and guardians, and is one of only 17 states that statutorily directs them to do so. (See pages 8-9.)

The state has a research-based and comprehensive teacher evaluation plan. However, the state does not require frequent teacher evaluations, which results in an evaluation tool that is not effective at making substantive changes to teaching staff.

The Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth, the state-mandated teacher evaluation tool, purports to link teacher evaluations to professional development, yet educators are divided as to the effectiveness of that linkage. Some states require annual teacher evaluations; Tennessee, however, only requires districts to evaluate licensed teachers twice in the tenure of their ten year license. In addition, district officials and principals did not think that teacher evaluations improve teacher accountability. (See pages 9-12.)

Tennessee does not have a strong or funded new teacher induction program.

While the State Board of Education has identified value in teacher mentoring and induction programs, it does not require local education agencies to administer them; in addition, the state has not targeted funds to sustain a strong mentoring program. Tennessee lags behind several southeastern states that have developed new teacher induction programs, though Memphis City

and Hamilton County both have strong induction programs for new teachers that could provide models for Tennessee. (See pages 12-17.)

Because of teacher shortages in Tennessee, the state Department of Education is developing a coordinated teacher recruitment plan. However, teacher retention continues to be a problem.

Despite federal approval of Tennessee's highly qualified teacher plan, the state's teacher recruitment efforts have had limited impact on high priority schools. Several state initiatives, including Teach Tennessee, which focuses on mid-career professionals as teacher candidates, BASE-TN, which focuses on special education teacher recruitment, and the Minority Teaching Fellows Scholarship Program, have laudable intentions; however, the programs are not producing the kind of recruitment numbers necessary to combat Tennessee's teacher shortage problem. In part because of this, the state Department of Education has developed a central recruitment initiative that includes data collection and analysis of all current state recruitment programs as well as incentive packages for potential teachers. Financial incentives as a recruitment strategy have shown promise in other states as well as in some Tennessee school districts. (See pages 17-20.)

The state's tenure law appears to protect some poorly qualified teachers; firing an ineffective teacher remains an arduous, time-consuming, and costly task.

Despite their valuable purpose to ensure administrative fairness toward teaching staff, tenure laws tend to have significant negative effects on teacher accountability. (See pages 21-22.)

Though Tennessee has one of the lowest graduation rates in the country, the state does not adequately assist districts with graduation rate data and does not have a comprehensive state dropout prevention plan.

Policy options for dealing with dropout problems are confounded by the fact that there are several ways to measure graduation and dropout rates, and different states, organizations, and entities use different definitions. States have employed a variety of actions to prevent dropouts, but Tennessee has not developed a thorough dropout prevention plan. In addition, though common data inaccuracies in graduation rates require ongoing assessment, neither the U.S. Department of Education nor Tennessee's Department of Education audit graduation data. (See pages 22-26.)

The quality of alternative schools varies greatly across districts; some schools are not adequately serving the needs of students suspended or expelled, while others show promising practices.

The districts' approaches to alternative education, including their staffing of, resources for, and methods of behavioral management and academic instruction, vary widely, along with the overall quality of the schools. Some systems, such as Memphis City, operate promising programs; however, alternative schools in some systems are accurately described by principals as "holding stations." Such programs lack adequate academic instruction, counseling services, and facilities, offering little hope that the students they serve will make academic or behavioral improvements. (See pages 26-28.)

All five districts face challenges implementing the NCLB-required supplemental educational services to low-performing students. Student participation is low in every district and it is unclear whether these services will improve student achievement.

Districts across the country face challenges implementing the requirement that parents and families of eligible low-performing students be notified of available supplemental education services. In addition, the Tennessee Department of Education has had difficulty monitoring supplemental service providers – which, by law, cannot be high priority districts themselves – and determining their impact on student achievement. Furthermore, student participation in supplemental education services is low across the state. (See pages 28-32.)

Legislative Recommendations

The General Assembly may wish to continue to enhance funding for at-risk and English language learning students.

The General Assembly may wish to require an induction and mentoring program for new teachers in Tennessee and provide funds necessary to implement such a program as developed by the Tennessee Department of Education and State Board of Education.

The General Assembly may wish to consider increasing the number of times that a licensed teacher must be evaluated.¹

Administrative Recommendations

The Tennessee Department of Education should develop and seek federal and state funding for a statewide, comprehensive induction program for new teachers.

The Tennessee Department of Education should offer additional trainings for administrators in using the Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth, the state-mandated teacher evaluation tool. The Department should also clearly articulate to administrators that they are responsible for following up on teachers' future growth plans. The Framework includes a future growth plan meant to outline necessary professional development for individual teachers.

The Tennessee Department of Education should evaluate the effectiveness of the parent/family involvement plans in engaging more parental and family involvement.

The Tennessee Department of Education should ensure that the results of an evaluation of supplemental educational service providers be provided to parents prior to their choosing a provider.

No Child Left Behind requires that schools in their third or more year of high priority status offer supplemental education services, namely tutoring, to low-performing students. The state Department of Education released the approved providers list, and is working on an evaluation of these providers. Parents and families need to be made aware of the results of this evaluation.

The Tennessee Department of Education should develop a comprehensive plan to reduce dropouts and include an audit of district graduation rate data to ensure accuracy.

The State Board of Education should consider adding a component of teacher observations to the Framework, much like those in the Toledo Plan for Teacher Evaluation.

The Toledo Plan model uses peer reviews for teacher evaluation; this addition to Tennessee's teacher evaluation Framework could significantly improve it.

(See pages 32-34.)

The Department of Education provided a response to this report but declined to specifically address its conclusions or recommendations. The State Board of Education's response is included. See Appendix B on page 39.

¹ See *TCA* § 49-2-203 for the law requiring local boards to adhere to the State Board of Education's evaluation requirements, which include tenured teacher evaluations only twice in ten years.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

SCOPE 1

METHODOLOGY 2

BACKGROUND 3

STATEWIDE CONCLUSIONS 6

CONCLUSIONS: GOALS AND GOVERNANCE 6

 BEP Inadequacy for Urban Districts, At-Risk Students, and English Language Learners 6

 Promising Initiatives in State and Local Family Involvement 8

CONCLUSIONS: TEACHING QUALITY 9

 Problems with the State’s Teacher Evaluation Plan 9

 The Absence of a State New Teacher Induction Program 12

 A Limited State Focus on Teacher Recruitment and Retention 17

 The Negative Impact of Tenure on Teacher Accountability 21

CONCLUSIONS: STUDENT DISCIPLINE, ATTENDANCE, AND DROPOUT 22

 Tennessee’s Dropout Crisis 22

 Alternative School Concerns 26

CONCLUSIONS: INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT 28

 Challenges with No Child Left Behind’s Supplemental Education Services Requirement 28

RECOMMENDATIONS 32

APPENDICES 35

 Appendix A – Persons Contacted 35

 Appendix B – Response Letters from the State Department of Education and the
 State Board of Education 39

INTRODUCTION

Tennessee Code Annotated §49-1-602 charges the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) to study schools and districts that have failed to meet state standards of adequate progress.¹ Every year, the state Department of Education releases a list of high priority schools and districts that are at varying stages of meeting these standards. For the purposes of this report, OEA reviewed schools in the School Improvement 2 category of the state’s high priority schools list.

This report defines state-level issues relevant to Improvement 2 schools and their districts and highlights exceptional and noteworthy practices in school districts that attempt to address these issues. Additionally, OEA developed a supplement to this report for each of the five districts with Improvement 2 schools – Metro Nashville, Memphis, Hamilton County, Knox County, and Fayette County.

SCOPE

The purpose of OEA’s study is twofold. First, it informs the legislature of how well districts’ existing policies and practices support the improvement of student achievement in Improvement 2 schools. Second, it includes recommendations that support improving student achievement. This report focuses on findings and recommendations at the state level. The five supplemental reports focus on findings and recommendations at the district level.

There are 24 “Improvement 2” schools in five school districts – the four large urban districts in the state and Fayette County. The study reviewed all 24 schools and the five districts:

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Alex Green Elementary School
Glenclyff Comprehensive High School
Hillwood Comprehensive High School
Hunters Lane Comprehensive High School
Jere Baxter Middle School
Joelton Middle School
McGavock Comprehensive High School
Neely’s Bend Middle School
Paragon Mills Elementary School

Fayette County Schools

Central Elementary School
Fayette Ware Comprehensive High School

Hamilton County Schools

Clifton Hills Elementary School
Howard School of Academics and Technology
Red Bank High School
Soddy-Daisy Middle School

Knox County Schools

Austin-East Magnet High School
Knox Adaptive Education Center
Northwest Middle School

Memphis City Schools

Klondike Elementary School
Northside High School
Oakhaven Middle/High School
Pyramid Academy
Raleigh-Egypt Middle School
Trezevant High School

The scope for the study was limited to four education policy areas that impact the quality of instruction and student achievement:

Goals and governance

- How clearly are districts and schools setting goals and assessing their progress?
- How well are districts and schools developing a positive and effective work environment?
- How effectively are districts and schools involving families and the community in improving achievement?

¹ T.C.A. §49-1-602 requires the OEA to study jointly with the Department of Education schools placed “on notice.” The term “on notice” is no longer used by the Department; instead, the Department calls all the schools and districts on the list “high priority,” and has renamed “on notice” schools and districts as those in the third year of failing to meet adequate yearly progress (also called School Improvement 2).

- Are resources allocated to schools in a way that allows them to be used for the most important student achievement improvement efforts?

Teaching quality

- How well are districts' professional development initiatives meeting the needs of teachers and administrators?
- How effective are teacher and administrator evaluations and how are teachers and administrators held accountable for improving student achievement?
- Are districts taking the necessary steps to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers?

Student discipline, attendance, and dropout

- What are districts and schools doing to establish safe and orderly environments in the schools?
- How effective are districts and schools at addressing drop out and attendance issues?

Instructional support

- How effective have supplemental education services, namely tutoring, been at targeting students' learning needs?
- How well are districts and schools using technology to improve student achievement?
- How effective is the district at ensuring that teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials?

METHODOLOGY

The Office of Education Accountability used a variety of methods to collect information about schools' and districts' policies. Staff conducted a literature review to define the four areas of study and determine indicators of best practices. In addition, staff reviewed numerous school, district, and state documents pertaining to the four areas. OEA conducted surveys of district staff and school principals and also interviewed district superintendents, key district staff members, school principals, assistant principals, and other school staff.

Office of Education Accountability staff met with staff from the Department of Education prior to commencing the project to discuss the methodology and scope. In addition, OEA staff corresponded regularly with Department staff throughout the process. OEA staff also met with Department staff prior to publication of the report to review the methodology, research, findings, and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, heralded a new era of state accountability for student achievement.

NCLB requires states to establish standards for what students need to know and which skills they must possess, and to test students yearly in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school. Schools and districts face a series of consequences, including mandatory after school tutoring, technical assistance, and school choice, if they do not make sufficient progress. The percent of students scoring proficient or above on the state tests must increase incrementally until school year 2013-14, when 100 percent of students are expected to be proficient in every state. This expected annual improvement is the “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) provision of the law.

What is AYP?

Schools and districts are held accountable for gains in student achievement under NCLB. This accountability is based on whether schools and districts are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting the goal of 100% of students being academically proficient by the 2013-14 school year.

States set their own AYP targets that apply to both the school population as a whole, and to multiple student subgroups.² For example, if 85 percent of students must score proficient on the elementary math test to meet the target, then 85 percent of the entire school population must score proficient, as well as 85 percent of each student subgroup (white, African American, limited English proficient, etc.). In Tennessee, a school or district must have 45 students in a subgroup to count in the AYP calculations.

To meet AYP, schools and districts must meet every applicable target. The number of targets depends on the number of its student subgroups.

NCLB recognizes gains in various subgroups not meeting AYP with the “safe harbor” provision, which qualifies schools and districts for AYP status. If a subgroup fails to meet AYP in reading/language arts/writing or math, the school would be eligible for safe harbor if:

1. the percent of students scoring below proficient in the subgroup has decreased by at least 10 percent; and
2. the subgroup has made the target for the additional indicator (attendance in elementary and middle school or graduation rate in high school).

Tennessee has developed a system of consequences for schools and districts not meeting AYP. Sanctions begin after a school or district has not made AYP for two consecutive years.

With the introduction of NCLB, Tennessee revamped its accountability system for districts and schools. The state requires all schools and districts to meet AYP in three categories: math, reading/language arts/writing, and an additional indicator (attendance rate in elementary and middle schools and graduation rate in high schools). According to the state Department of Education, a school or district that fails to meet AYP in a content area for two years in a row will be identified as high priority. To exit a category of school improvement, a school or LEA must meet AYP in that content area for two consecutive years. After one year of not making AYP, a school is “targeted,” but not in high priority status. The following exhibit shows actions taken at each high priority level.

² Subgroups include: White, Hispanic, African American, Native American, Asian, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency

Exhibit 1: Tennessee's High Priority Categories and Repercussions for Schools, 2006

High priority category	Actions taken by state, district, and school per state law	Actions taken by state, district, and school per NCLB	Number of schools in 2005-06
School Improvement 1 After two consecutive years of not making AYP	State publicly identifies schools	State publicly identifies schools; Students can opt out of their school with public school choice option; School Improvement Plan (SIP) revised	96
School Improvement 2 After three years of not making AYP	Joint study of schools and systems by State Department of Education (SDE) and Office of Education Accountability; SDE technical assistance/ Exemplary Educator program; Parent notification	Supplemental services must be provided to low performing students in Title I schools	24
Corrective Action After four years of not making AYP	Districts must obtain state approval for allocation of resources to schools; Principals are required to have performance contracts	At least one corrective action must be taken (replace staff, impose new curriculum, decrease management authority at the school, appoint outside expert, or reorganize organization)	0
Restructuring 1 After five years of not making AYP	Districts must obtain state approval for allocation of resources to schools; SDE presents options for school to plan for alternative governance/ district develops plan for alternative governance	District prepares a plan and makes arrangements for alternative governance	14
Restructuring 2 After six years of not making AYP	The Commissioner assumes any and all powers of governance of the system	Implement alternative governance using any of various options (reopen as public charter school, replace all or most staff, contract with private management company, state takeover, or other)	20
State/LEA Reconstitution Plan After seven years of not making AYP	Not applicable	Implement alternative governance using any of various options (reopen as public charter school, replace all or most staff, contract with a private management company, state takeover, or other)	5 (all in Memphis)

SOURCE: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Accountability Chart

In addition, the Department identifies schools that are in a high priority category but have since made AYP for one year as "improving." Of the 96 schools in the Improvement 1 category, 94 are "improving," meaning they did not make AYP in 2002-03 or 2003-04, but did make AYP in 2004-05.

Exemplary Educators

Once schools reach the School Improvement 2 level, the SDE begins providing technical assistance through Exemplary Educators. These educators are often retired teachers who are placed in schools (and are sometimes shared between schools) to help with school improvement plan revisions, analyzing data, modeling instruction, and various other tasks.

In Tennessee, AYP in elementary and middle schools is based on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) in reading and math and the attendance rate. AYP in high schools is based on the English II, 11th Grade Writing and Algebra I Gateway

exams and the graduation rate. Following are the percentages of students that must score proficient to meet AYP through 2014.

Exhibit 2: Tennessee Benchmarks for Meeting AYP in Elementary and Middle Schools

School Year	Reading/Language Arts Target	Math Target	Attendance Rate
Through 2006-07	83%	79%	93%
Through 2009-10	89%	86%	93%
Through 2012-13	94%	93%	93%
2013-14	100%	100%	93%

SOURCE: Tennessee Department of Education, "Frequently Asked Questions from Educators about No Child Left Behind and Accountability," June 2005.

Exhibit 3: Tennessee Benchmarks for Meeting AYP in High Schools

School Year	Reading/Language Arts Target	Math Target	Graduation Rate
Through 2006-07	90%	75%	90%
Through 2009-10	93%	83%	90%
Through 2012-13	97%	91%	90%
2013-14	100%	100%	100%

SOURCE: Tennessee Department of Education, "Frequently Asked Questions from Educators about No Child Left Behind and Accountability," June 2005.

STATEWIDE CONCLUSIONS

Many common themes emerged during the study of the schools on notice in the five districts. State policies can directly impact some of these issues, and this report seeks to highlight those areas. (For district-level policy issues, see the supplements for each of the five districts.)

CONCLUSIONS: GOALS AND GOVERNANCE

The BEP does not adequately fund the state’s urban districts in part because it understates the cost of educating at-risk students and English language learners. These deficiencies of the BEP force some districts to raise substantially more local funds for education.

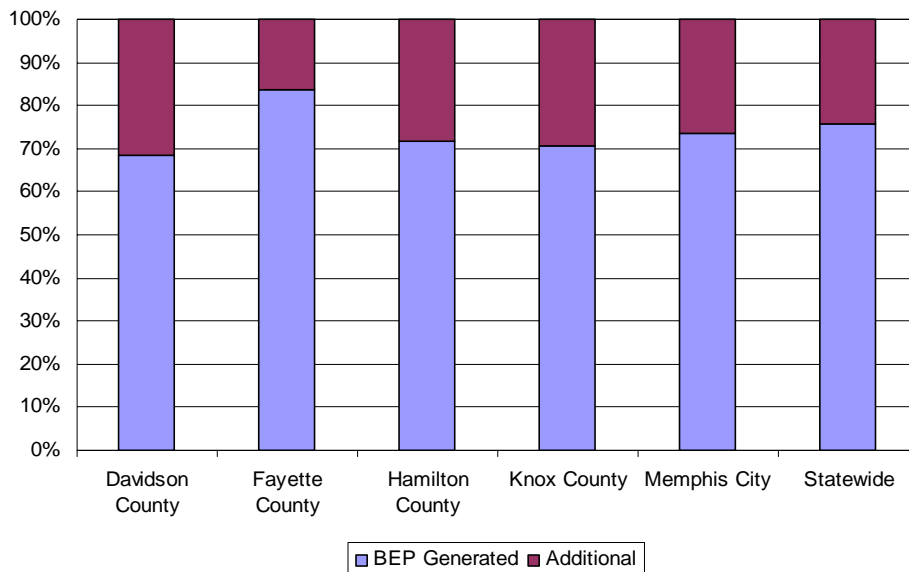
The Basic Education Program (BEP) is a funding formula that determines state and local funding levels deemed necessary to provide a basic level of education for Tennessee students. This basic level of funding includes both a state share of the BEP and a local share of the BEP. For example, the BEP formula analyzes several factors, such as property taxes and fiscal capacity of a school district, to determine the amount that the state will

contribute to a district’s education and the amount that the district itself is expected to raise for education. All local school systems are free to raise additional education dollars beyond the funds generated by the BEP.³

The BEP formula generates substantially less state and local revenue for the four urban districts in the state.

On average, the BEP generates 75 percent of the statewide state and local revenue contribution. As Exhibit 4 shows, the BEP generates a state and local total contribution of less than 75 percent for every system with Improvement 2 schools, except for Fayette County. This implies that the four urban districts need significantly more funds to provide a basic education than the BEP generates.

Exhibit 4: BEP Revenues as a Percent of Total State and Local Revenues, Fiscal Year 2005

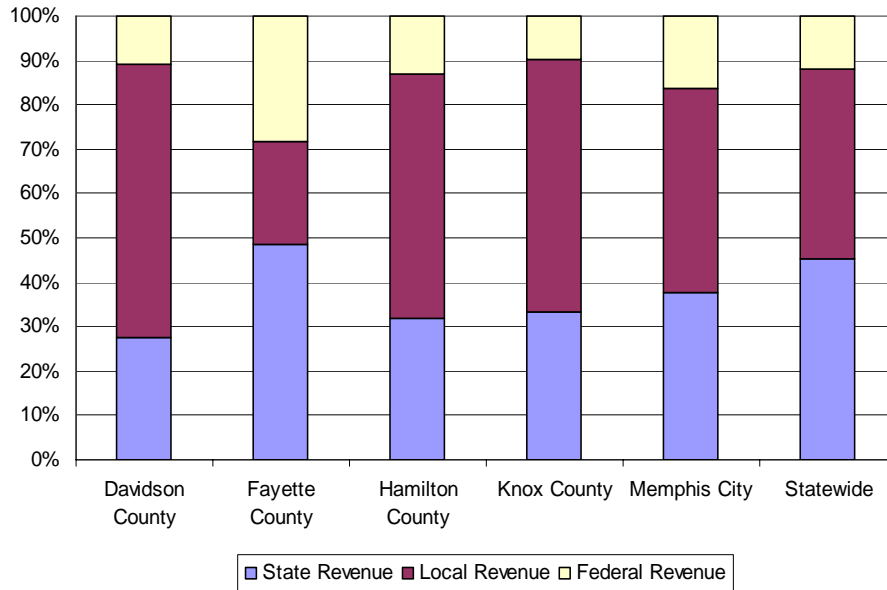


Source: Annual Statistical Report, Fiscal Year 2004-2005 and FY05 BEP – July; Department of Education

³ T.C.A. § 49-3-314.

In addition, state financial support for education in systems with Improvement 2 schools fell below the statewide average in fiscal year 2005. As Exhibit 5 shows, of total current revenue for 2005, state revenues comprised less than 40 percent of total revenues in the four urban districts; the state provided only 27.55 percent of total current revenue to Davidson County.

**Exhibit 5: Revenues by Governmental Unit as a Percent of Total Revenues
Fiscal Year 2005**



Source: Annual Statistical Report, Fiscal Year 2004-2005; Department of Education

The BEP understates the costs to educate at-risk and English language learning students.

Research suggests that students from less affluent households and students that do not use English as their primary language require greater resources and time to perform as well as their peers. The BEP recognizes the additional cost, but still substantially understates the burden. Administrative and legislative action in 2006 increased the enhanced funding to recognize 38.5 percent of at-risk and reduced necessary ELL students to 45 for an instructor and 450 for a translator.⁴ In November 2004, the BEP Review Committee recommended that enhanced at-risk funding apply to 100 percent of eligible at-risk students and also that English language learners receive one instructor for every 20 learners and one translator for every 200 learners.⁵ The Committee again recommended these changes in 2005 and 2006.

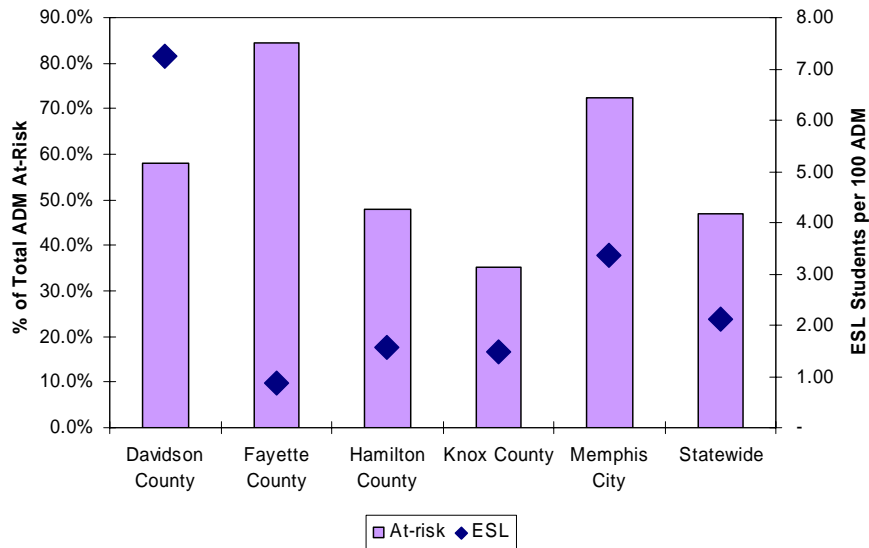
It is reasonable to believe that a school system will spend an amount it feels is necessary to educate its students within its ability to raise revenues. It should not be inferred that giving more state money to systems that fail to achieve performance standards would increase performance; however, low state support combined with inadequate BEP-generated funds for certain groups of students places additional financial burdens on systems with a disproportionate share of these students.

This is especially problematic for school systems reviewed for this report. As Exhibit 6 shows, Memphis City and Davidson County report higher than the statewide average enrollment of both at-risk students and English language learner students and other systems reported large numbers of both categories of students. Notably, nearly 90 percent of Fayette County’s students are deemed at-risk.

⁴ Public Chapter 963, per passage of the appropriations bill (HB4025/SB3914) on 5/26/2006. Signed into law on 6/21/06, effective 7/1/06.

⁵ BEP Review Committee Annual Report, November 1, 2006, Accessed at http://state.tn.us/sbe/BEP/bep_11_06.pdf on December 19, 2006.

Exhibit 6: Prevalence of At-Risk and English as a Second Language (ESL) Students in Relation to Average Daily Membership (ADM) by System, Fiscal Year 2005



Source: Annual Statistical Report, Fiscal Year 2004-2005 and FY05 BEP – July; Department of Education

Because of low family involvement in many schools, the state, districts, and schools are implementing some promising practices to improve family involvement.

Studies indicate that a student is more likely to succeed in school when parents or other family members are involved in the student's school life.⁶ Because of a lack of family involvement in many school districts, No Child Left Behind emphasizes the state role in improving family participation in schools.

District and school officials say family involvement is a barrier, but are focusing on practices to improve it.

Officials from every district and most schools interviewed indicated that garnering family support is challenging. Several school principals mentioned that a parent/teacher organization exists, but participation is limited to a handful of parents; unlike many parent/teacher groups nationwide, none of those mentioned by principals are raising funds for the school.

Staff from all the districts and schools on notice assigned moderate to high importance on improving family and community engagement in their school improvement plans, and many districts and schools are already using various best practices to facilitate family involvement. Families and community tended to be less involved in actually determining school policies and management such as budgets, staff assignments, curriculum, and teacher development activities. Some states and cities have developed more site-based management teams that include parents in substantive decisions affecting school policy.

Tennessee requires districts to implement parent/family involvement efforts, in part because of NCLB.

No Child Left Behind has specific parental involvement requirements for all schools and additional requirements for Title I schools. All districts must develop, jointly with parents or guardians, a written parent involvement policy. States must review these policies and practices to determine if they meet

⁶ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement," National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Annual Synthesis 2002, p. 24.

the law's requirements and provide information on effective family engagement practices to the schools.

Recognizing the importance of family involvement in schools, Tennessee passed legislation⁷ in 2004 requiring school districts to develop policies that promote the involvement of parents and guardians, and is one of only 17 states that statutorily directs them to do so.⁸ The plans must be consistent with the State Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement policy adopted in 2003, which outlines essential components for an effective family involvement initiative.⁹ To comply with the legislation, the Department developed a systemic approach – called the Family Friendly Schools initiative – incorporating the State Board's policy. The Department has partnered with the Tennessee School Board Association to educate key leaders within school districts of the new parental involvement requirements and the Family Friendly Schools initiative. Each district was asked to register a team of six members for a year-long professional development series on developing and implementing effective family and community engagement policies and plans. One hundred thirty-one of 136 districts participated, including all five districts with School Improvement 2 schools. In 2005, NCLB Field Service Consultants from the state Department of Education visited each district to approve the required plans, to monitor implementation, and collect best practices to disseminate. Some of the best practices include strategies for including parents in the classroom, informing parents of school information, and addressing parent needs. In addition, the Department cites several district policies as best practices, including Metro Nashville Public Schools' Customer Service Center and Call Center.¹⁰ As of March 2006, all districts have received full approval of their parent involvement plans.

CONCLUSIONS: TEACHING QUALITY

The state has a research-based and comprehensive teacher evaluation plan. However, the state does not require frequent teacher evaluations, which results in an evaluation tool that is not effective at making substantive changes to teaching staff.

The State Board of Education approved the Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth as the required teacher evaluation process in 1997. The Board revised the plan in 2004 to comply with the No Child Left Behind requirement that all teachers of core academic subjects be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year.¹¹

The Framework covers six areas in teaching: planning, teaching strategies, student assessment and evaluation, learning environment, professional growth, and

communication with students and families.

Professionally licensed teachers are required to be evaluated twice during the tenure of their 10-year teaching license. Apprentice teachers must be evaluated yearly.

The Framework purports to link teacher evaluations to professional growth, yet educators are divided as to the effectiveness of that linkage.

The Framework includes a “future growth plan” that outlines areas to be strengthened, professional development goals to target weaknesses, and an action plan for improvement. Though the future growth plan is based on substantial research stating that effective evaluations must be connected to professional development, some principals said that the future growth plans were ineffective because of a lack of follow-through. A State Board of Education-required evaluation of the Framework showed that principals and teachers are split on the effectiveness of the future growth plan. In a question measuring the usefulness of the plan in determining strengths and weaknesses of teachers, roughly half of the respondents – 324 – said they found the growth plan to be useful or very useful; 316

⁷ T.C.A. §49-2-305.

⁸ Education Commission of the States, “State Notes: Parental Involvement in Education,” Updated by Kyle Zinth, March 2005; Accessed at <http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/59/11/5911.htm> on July 12, 2006.

⁹ Tennessee State Board of Education website; <http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/Policies/4.207%20Parent%20Family%20Involvement.pdf>; Accessed on July 12, 2006.

¹⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, “Family and Community Engagement, Strategies and Best Practices,” p. 4.

¹¹ Tennessee Department of Education website: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/frameval/>; Accessed on July 12, 2006.

respondents said it had little to no use or were neutral on its usefulness.¹² In response to the challenges of the future growth plan, the Department of Education stated that school administrators are expected to hold teachers accountable for their future growth plans.¹³

Officials from two districts indicate that the Department needs to offer more training to principals on effective use of the evaluations.¹⁴ In response, the Department of Education stated that it offers extensive evaluator training that includes seven trainings a year on each of three parts of the evaluation (Comprehensive Assessment Part A, Part B, and Special Groups/Focused Assessment).¹⁵ The Department conducts trainings in Chattanooga, Greeneville, Jackson, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville. Follow-up sessions are available by request.¹⁶ However, school and district officials stated that the trainings were insufficient. In addition, the Department of Education does not offer a refresher course for trainers, perhaps because there is only one state trainer on staff at the Department. In response, Department staff indicated that they encourage evaluators to come back to trainings for a refresher.¹⁷ The Department does not allow most districts to train evaluators because of a lack of accountability in the training.¹⁸

District officials and principals did not think that teacher evaluations improved teacher accountability.

Though the Framework has as one of its chief purposes to hold teachers accountable, district staff and principals did not readily see a correlation between evaluation results and administrative actions. One district official went so far as to say that the evaluations have little to no effect on tenured teachers. Another district official explained that one of three things can happen when teachers receive poor evaluations: reprimands, suspensions, or dismissals. By far the most common action is a reprimand, with little follow-through.¹⁹

The state requires districts to evaluate licensed teachers only twice in the tenure of their ten year license; many districts and schools view this as inadequate. Other states in the southeast vary in their frequency of evaluations, as Exhibit 7 shows:

Exhibit 7: Sample State Requirements for Frequency of Teacher Evaluations

State	Frequency of Evaluations for Licensed Teachers	Frequency of Evaluations for Non-licensed Teachers
Georgia ²⁰	Annually	Annually
North Carolina ²¹	Annually, unless a local board determines otherwise	Three times a year
South Carolina ²²	Up to local boards and based on previous evaluations	Annually
Tennessee	Twice in ten years	Annually
Texas ²³	Once in five years	Once in five years
Virginia ²⁴	Up to local boards	Up to local boards

¹² *An Evaluation of the Tennessee Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth*, Project Investigators: Dr. Trevor Hutchins, Belmont University, and Dr. Sharon Yates, Austin Peay State University, April 21, 2006, p. 31.

¹³ Phone conversation with Kaneal Alexander, Director, Teacher Evaluation, Tennessee Department of Education, April 27, 2006.

¹⁴ Interview with staff at Memphis City Schools, January 12, 2006; interview with staff at Metro Nashville Public Schools, December 13, 2005.

¹⁵ Email to Katie Cour from Kaneal Alexander, Director, Teacher Evaluation, Tennessee Department of Education, "Re: Info on trainings," July 25, 2006.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Phone interview with Kaneal Alexander, Director, Teacher Evaluation, Tennessee Department of Education, April 27, 2006.

¹⁹ Interview with staff at Metro Nashville Public Schools, December 13, 2005, Interview with staff at Knox County Schools, January 24, 2006.

²⁰ Email to Katie Cour from Wendy Hughes, Georgia Department of Education, "Re: License evaluations," March 13, 2006.

²¹ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; www.ncpublicschools.org/evalpsemployees/memo.html; Accessed on July 12, 2006.

²² South Carolina Department of Education; Accessed at <http://www.scteachers.org/adept/evalpdf/ADEPTStatute.pdf> on August 21, 2006, p. 4.

²³ Texas Education Agency website; www.tea.state.tx.us/eddev/faq/eddev_pdaslaw.html; Accessed on July 12, 2006.

Without more frequent evaluations, districts have little opportunity to dismiss the worst teachers. However, several school principals stated that if evaluations were performed more frequently, the Framework would have to be changed because it is very time-consuming.²⁵

Some states, including Tennessee, have tried tying evaluations to pay, the “pay-for-performance” model. A National Governors Association issue brief explains: “Evaluations that determine teacher salary or influence a teacher’s professional designation are more likely to affect instructional practices and teaching outcomes than ones that do not.”²⁶ Tennessee’s pay-for performance model, Career Ladder, lasted from 1984 to 1997 and rewarded qualified teachers with pay increases for agreeing to be evaluated every five years. Though many teachers lauded the program, some complained that Career Ladder’s infrequent observation requirements did not allow evaluators to gain a complete picture of a teacher’s abilities. In 1987, *TCA §49-5-5004* made the program voluntary, and in 1997, the same section of the law prevented any additional teachers from entering the program, mainly because of budgetary constraints.²⁷ Some states, including Iowa, Maryland, and Arizona, have seen promising results from their pay-for-performance models.

Other states, including Tennessee, have considered linking student achievement to teacher accountability, using Value-Added Models (VAMs). The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), Tennessee’s model for measuring the impact of districts, school, and teachers on student academic gains (as opposed to performance at one point in time), can be used in teacher evaluations, but the state does not require this. By law, teachers’ TVAAS results are not publicly disclosed.²⁸ States hesitate to link student achievement to teacher accountability, largely because of the complexity in determining outside factors to students’ success or failure. In addition, value-added models rely on random teacher placements to be valid; that is, the results assume that the teacher would have the same results at any school. However, teacher assignment (and student placement) is not random; senior teachers often get to choose their schools and classes and in general parents have strong opinions about where their children will attend school. These factors limit randomization, and may impact the results of value-added models.²⁹ In addition, value-added testing does not affect all teachers.

The Framework does not allow principals to evaluate the ability of a teacher to connect with students.

One school principal said that the Framework does not have a way to describe the “X factor” in the student/teacher relationship – that connection and rapport that promotes a thriving learning environment.³⁰ One reason for this may be that only two observations are required of professionally-licensed teachers, and the observations can be any length of time.

To get at the “X factor” in teaching, some districts in other states have seen promising results from peer reviews and student reviews of teachers.³¹ The Toledo Plan, enacted in 1981 in Toledo, Ohio, was the first of its kind to use experienced teachers for evaluation of novice teachers. The plan is a comprehensive evaluation process that includes an initial conference between the evaluating teacher and the novice teacher to discuss supervision, evaluation, and the goal setting process; an observation period; an additional conference between the two teachers to discuss goals, strengths,

²⁴ Code of Virginia. 22.1-295; Accessed at <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+22.1-295> on July 12, 2006.

²⁵ Interview with staff at Alex Green Elementary School; January 25, 2006; Glenclyff Comprehensive High School, February 22, 2006; Hunters Lane Comprehensive High School, January 23, 2006; Metro Nashville Public Schools, December 13, 2006; Klondike Elementary School, January 11, 2006; Northside High School, January 11, 2006; and Oakhaven Middle and High School, January 10, 2006.

²⁶ National Governors Association Issue Brief, *Improving Teacher Evaluation to Improve Teaching Quality*, December 9, 2002; Accessed at http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/23/39/a0.pdf on July 12, 2006, p. 5.

²⁷ Thomas S. Dee and Benjamin J. Keys, “Dollars and Sense: What a Tennessee Experiment Tells Us about Merit Pay,” *Education Next*, Winter 2005, pp. 60-67.

²⁸ *T.C.A. §49-1-606*.

²⁹ Henry I. Braun, *Using Student Progress to Evaluate Teachers: A Primer on Value-Added Models*, Educational Testing Service, September 2005, p. 7-10.

³⁰ Interview with staff at McGavock Comprehensive High School, January 30, 2006.

³¹ National Governors Association Issue Brief, *Improving Teacher Evaluation to Improve Teaching Quality*, December 9, 2002, p. 4; Accessed at http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/23/39/a0.pdf on July 12, 2006.

and weaknesses; a growth period to allow the novice teacher time to follow through on goals; and a summary evaluation.³² Other districts have modeled peer evaluation components on this plan.

Despite the complaints, some district officials and principals mentioned several positive things about the Framework; in particular, they commented that the self-assessment and reflective aspects of the Framework are excellent.³³

Tennessee does not have a strong or funded new teacher induction program.

Though teacher retention is a challenge in the five districts with Improvement 2 schools and in most of those schools according to local officials, the state has not developed and funded an appropriate support system for new teachers.

Tennessee has historically taken a more neutral approach to teacher mentoring, recognizing it as a valuable tool but neither funding nor requiring it for new teachers. Several other states and some districts in Tennessee have developed and funded comprehensive induction programs that could guide the development of a statewide program for Tennessee.

Research shows that teacher induction programs have a positive impact on teacher retention rates.

Teacher induction programs aim to reduce attrition among new teachers and increase the quality of teaching with the hope of improving student learning. Many new teachers are assigned a class and left to “sink or swim” on their own. Induction or mentorship programs allow novice teachers to develop and perfect their teaching skills under the mentorship of more experienced and skilled colleagues.³⁴ As a result, teachers may develop more confidence in their abilities and may be less likely to leave the teaching profession.

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) weighs the pros and cons of induction programs: “Too often induction is seen as an expensive extra, something that is ‘nice but not necessary,’ an additional cost for already overburdened school districts. However, it is becoming clear that the costs of *not* giving teachers a strong start are substantial. . . NCTAF has estimated that, every year, America’s schools lose approximately \$2.6 billion to teacher attrition.”³⁵

A number of studies have shown that new teachers are more likely to leave in the first few years, particularly if they do not receive adequate support. One study showed that new teachers were less likely to leave the teaching profession when partnered with mentors and other teachers in their same subjects for planning and collaboration purposes.³⁶ The National Center for Education Research found that the attrition rate for new teachers who had participated in an induction program was only 15 percent compared to 26 percent for teachers who had not had any induction support over a four-year period.³⁷

Although most programs report a higher retention rate for teachers who have been through an induction program than those who have not, few comprehensive, controlled studies are available. An Education Commission of the States review of existing studies on induction programs found that while the impact of induction and mentoring differed significantly among the 10 studies reviewed, collectively

³² Toledo Federation of Teachers website: http://www.tft250.org/the_toledo_plan.htm; Accessed on July 12, 2006.

³³ Interview with staff at Memphis City School, January 10, 2006.

³⁴ American Federation of Teachers, “Beginning Teacher Induction: The Essential Bridge,” AFT Educational Issues Policy Brief, No. 13, September 2001, pp. 1-2; Accessed at <http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/policy13.pdf> on July 12, 2006.

³⁵ National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, “Induction Into Learning Communities,” August 2005, p. 8; Accessed at http://www.nctaf.org/documents/NCTAF_Induction_Paper_2005.pdf on September 11, 2006.

³⁶ T.M. Smith & R.M. Ingersoll, “What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover?” *American Educational Research Journal*, 41 (3), 2004, pp. 681-714.

³⁷ National Center for Education Statistics, *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline: 1992-93 College Graduates and Elementary/ Secondary School Teaching as of 1997*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, p. 49; Accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000152.pdf> on July 12, 2006.

the studies support the claim that assistance for new teachers and, in particular, mentoring programs have a positive impact on teachers and their retention.³⁸

As summarized in this review, evaluations of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) program found positive effects on beginning teacher retention. TxBESS participants left teaching at lower rates than beginning teachers who had not participated in the program for each of the first three years on the job. By year three, 24 percent of TxBESS participants had left their position compared to 34 percent of non-participants. Retention results were similar at both high-poverty and high-minority enrollment schools, which generally have higher attrition rates.³⁹

A benefit-cost analysis of a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers conducted in a medium sized California school district showed that after five years, an investment of \$1 in a comprehensive induction program produces a return of \$1.50.⁴⁰ The district used the induction model developed by the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Total costs of the program were calculated at \$13,000 over five years with benefits of \$20,000. The majority of the savings (49 percent) came from increasing teacher effectiveness, as measured by gains in achievement test scores. Attrition reductions resulted in eight percent of savings.

While teacher induction programs vary from state to state, effective programs have several elements in common.

The content, duration, and delivery of induction programs vary significantly and thus influence the effectiveness of induction/mentoring programs. Mentoring programs vary greatly. They can be formal or informal. They can provide comprehensive support from a full-time, highly trained mentor who meets regularly with new teachers, or they can work as informal buddy systems of support from an assigned fellow teacher who receives no release time, no compensation or training. A 2004 study by Ingersoll and Smith found that as the number of reported components of induction programs increased, teacher turnover decreased during the first year of teaching. The seven identified induction components included a mentor, common planning time, new teacher seminars, communications with administration, a support network, reduced teaching load, and a teacher's aide. Forty-one percent of new teachers who did not receive any of these induction components left after one year. In comparison, after one year, 27 percent of new teachers who received four of the identified components left. Of those who had received all seven components, only 18 percent left after one year.⁴¹

A Southeast Center for Teacher Quality's study indicates that the elements for an effective induction program include 1) adequate funding, 2) a strong content focus, 3) well-trained mentors, 4) time for mentors and novices to work together, and 5) performance-based assessments of new teachers.⁴²

The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession highlights several key aspects of a strong new teacher/induction program:

- a streamlined *hiring* process that is easy to understand and timely;
- a planned *orientation* prior to the beginning of the school year that includes tours, introductions, administrative information (benefits, substitutes, etc.), and teaching information (first day assistance, evaluation information, resources);
- an effective *mentoring* program that appropriately matches pairs of teachers;
- a new teacher-specific *professional development* plan; and

³⁸ Richard Ingersoll and Jeffrey Kralik, "The Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Retention: What the Research Says," Education Commission of the States, *Research Review*, February 2004; Accessed at <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.htm> on July 12, 2006.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Anthony Villar and Michael Strong, "Is Mentoring Worth the Money? A Benefit-Cost Analysis and Five Year Rate of Return of a Comprehensive Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers," University of California, June, 2005, (Not yet published).

⁴¹ Smith and Ingersoll, 2004 as reported by Michael Strong, "Mentoring New Teachers to Increase Retention" Research Brief, New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, December 2005.

⁴² Berry, Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, Peggy, and Hokke, "Assessing and Supporting New Teachers: Lessons from the Southeast," The Southeast Center for Teacher Quality, December 2002, pp. 7, 10.

- an ongoing *evaluation* of a new teacher's impact in the classroom, including thoughtful observations and feedback from mentors and administrative staff and self-assessment tools.⁴³

In recent years the number of teacher induction programs that provide support, guidance, and orientation for beginning teachers in their first few years of teaching has grown. Although the particulars and level of financial support vary, programs generally aim to increase the confidence and effectiveness of new teachers, and thus to stem the high levels of attrition among beginning teachers, which estimates place as high as 40 to 50 percent within the first five years.⁴⁴

In 1990-91, 40 percent of new teachers nationwide reported participation in a formal induction program, but participation rose to 80 percent by 1999-2000, partly as a result of a rapid expansion in state-level policy focused on induction. In the 1990s state sponsored induction was rare. Even by 1998, only 14 states provided funding for induction or mentoring programs and only 10 set aside monies for mentor training. As of 2003, 30 states reported offering an induction program to novice teachers; 28 states specifically required at least one year of mentorship support.⁴⁵ In 2005, 16 states both required and financed mentorship support⁴⁶ with anywhere between \$500 and \$3,500 per new teacher annually.⁴⁷

While the State Board of Education has identified value in teacher mentoring and induction programs, it does not require local education agencies to administer them; in addition, the state has not targeted funds to sustain a strong mentoring program.

The Tennessee Model for Mentoring and New Teacher Induction began in 1998, when the State Board of Education developed the *Tennessee Standards for Teaching: A Guide for Mentoring*. Upon receiving a federal Title II teaching quality grant, Tennessee piloted a teacher mentor training curriculum and trained approximately 1,800 teacher mentors between 1999 and 2003, who were then encouraged to continue mentoring programs in their local school districts.⁴⁸ According to the Department's website, "the demand for mentor training consistently exceeded the availability of opportunities," thus, the Department could not adequately train enough teacher mentors to make the program effective.⁴⁹ The Department convened a task force to develop a model for school districts to train their own mentors, and, in the spring of 2003, held "Lead Mentor Training" academies in the three grand divisions of the state. Despite the positive feedback from the trainings, the mentoring academies did little to ensure the continuation of quality teacher mentoring programs in the school districts. In addition, the state did not target funds to sustain an effective mentorship program, reducing the opportunity for mentoring to improve teaching quality. The Education Commission of the States indicates that the locus of responsibility for mentoring and induction programs must be clear and appropriate.⁵⁰ In Tennessee, the locus was neither.

The State Board of Education's Advisory Council on Teacher Education and Certification is considering an induction policy that would address several of these issues. Some of the goals of the policy include:

- Retaining quality teachers;
- Improving beginning teachers/skills and performance, especially as they relate to using research-based best practices in the classroom; and

⁴³ "Effective Support for New Teachers in Washington State: Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction," Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, May 2005, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Richard Ingersoll and Jeffrey Kralik, "The Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Retention: What the Research Says," Education Commission of the States, *Research Review*, February 2004; Accessed at <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/50/36/5036.htm> on July 12, 2006.

⁴⁵ Lora Bartlett, Lisa Johnson, Diane Lopez, Emily Sugarman, and Marguerite Wilson, "Teacher Induction in the Midwest: Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio: Implications for State Policy," New Teacher Center at University of California, Santa Cruz, May 2005 as reported in Quality Counts 2005.

⁴⁶ "Quality Counts 2005," *Education Week*, Vol. 24, No. 17, January 6, 2005, p. 94.

⁴⁷ Bartlett, Johnson, Lopez, Sugarman, and Wilson, May 2005.

⁴⁸ Tennessee Department of Education, "Tennessee Model for Teacher Mentoring."

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Education Commission of the States; Accessed at <http://ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/issue.asp?issueID=129> on September 11, 2006.

- Providing a seamless transition into teacher.⁵¹

The Advisory Council is finalizing its proposal and will likely present its position – that the State Board support and fund a mentoring and induction program – to the State Board in early 2007.

Tennessee lags behind several southeastern states that have developed new teacher induction programs.

Seven of the 16 states that currently require and fund mentoring for new teachers are in the Southeast: Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia. These states require new-teacher induction programs by statute. While it is difficult to determine the specific costs of some teacher induction programs, research found that per-teacher expenditures ranged from \$200 in Virginia⁵² to \$2,000 in Kentucky and Arkansas. According to the Southeast Center for Teacher Quality in 2002, exemplary programs for new-teacher induction programs carry minimum price tags of \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year.⁵³

Several states are refining their programs and testing and evaluating pilot induction/mentoring programs. Virginia is testing three nationally recognized programs in 10 districts, as well as piloting a program in defined “hard to staff schools” in which schools can implement one of three nationally recognized induction programs or design their own program, subject to state approval. Virginia is doing extensive evaluation of the pilot programs and is developing a data base to follow teachers through their careers. Louisiana also has a pilot induction program that includes on-line mentoring. Kentucky recently conducted and is evaluating a pilot program to expand its program to two years. Programs in other states, especially after more intensive evaluation, can assist Tennessee in better evaluating components to include in a more comprehensive program.

Exhibit 8: Beginning teacher support programs in the Southeast as of July 2006

STATE	PROGRAM	PROGRAM LENGTH	IN STATUTE?	STATE FUNDING
Alabama	--			
Arkansas	Arkansas Mentoring and Induction Program	1-3 years	Yes	\$2,000 per teacher per year
Florida	--			
Georgia	In development			
Kentucky	Kentucky (Beginning) Teacher Internship Program	1 year team mentorship	Yes	\$5 million annually \$2,000 per teacher
Louisiana	Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program	2 year mentorship	Yes	\$500 per teacher
Mississippi	--			
North Carolina	Initial Licensure Program	3 years	Yes	\$100/per month per teacher
South Carolina	South Carolina Mentoring and Induction Program	1 year	Yes	\$998/year per teacher
Tennessee	--			
Texas	Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS)	3 years	No	\$0
Virginia	Statewide Mentor Teacher Program	1 year	Yes	\$750,000 \$200 per teacher
West Virginia	Teacher Mentorship Program	1 year mentoring	Yes	\$550,000 \$600 per teacher

SOURCES: *Education Week*, Quality Counts 2005; Council of Chief State School Officers, “Key State Education Policies on PK-12 Education: 2004,” 2005; interviews with state Departments of Education.

⁵¹ Email to Susan Mattson from Angie Cannon, Executive Director, Teacher Quality and Development, Tennessee Department of Education, “Induction Components,” June 21, 2006.

⁵² This figure is for the state-required programs in Virginia. The state is also currently sponsoring and evaluating pilot programs for more intensive induction and mentoring programs in the state.

⁵³ Berry, Barnett, Hopkins-Thompson, Peggy, and Hokke, December 2002.

Memphis City and Hamilton County both have strong induction programs for new teachers that could provide models for other Tennessee school districts.

While Tennessee does not require that all new teachers receive induction or mentoring, individual districts and/or schools provide some of these services on their own. In particular, Memphis City Schools' New Teacher Center (NTC) shows promising results. The University of Memphis College of Education modeled the program after the New Teacher Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz. The purpose of the Center is to "work with new teachers, providing hands-on assistance from mentor teachers, to make the first years of teaching within the Memphis City Schools a success."⁵⁴

The program includes:

- New teacher advisors – commendable veteran teachers who work full-time with new teachers on a weekly basis; typical work includes observing, offering feedback, coaching, providing emotional support, assisting with classroom management, modeling strong teaching practices, offering curriculum feedback and resources, and communicating with administrators.
- Seminar series – monthly seminar series that helps to build a support network and ongoing dialogue for beginning teachers; series focuses on pedagogy, best practices for working with diverse learners, and literacy.
- Release time – specific times throughout the year when beginning teachers can reflect, assess, observe, discuss, plan, and participate in staff development.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the New Teacher Center is its ongoing professional development assessment tools. Whereas several district officials and principals mentioned the lack of accountability for the professional development components of the Tennessee Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth, Memphis' New Teacher Center follows through with the future growth plans for its new teachers. Five tools, included in each new teacher's "professional portfolio," are used to hold the new teacher accountable for professional growth:

1. Assessment and professional growth – new teachers work with their advisors to form professional development goals and strategies; this Professional Growth Plan is revised throughout the year.
2. Self-Assessment – new teachers evaluate their own performance using self-assessment worksheets throughout the year.
3. Collaborative assessment logs – new teachers and advisors work together to document weekly successes, challenges, and next steps.
4. Formal and informal observations – throughout the year, advisors observe the teacher in action and provide specific feedback.
5. Analysis of student work – the program emphasizes the importance of analyzing student work on a regular basis to guide curriculum planning and professional development.⁵⁵

Evaluation of the program by the Center for Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis found that:

- NTC-supported teachers had substantially higher retention rates (86 percent) than the school district's historical baseline group (76 percent).
- NTC-supported teachers used student-centered teaching strategies or "best practices" in their classes more frequently than did control teachers.
- Students of NTC-sponsored teachers scored significantly higher on selected achievement tests than did students of the control teachers.⁵⁶

Hamilton County has developed a New Teacher Network, "a three-year support program...from the recent college graduate in the classroom for the first time to the veteran teacher who has transferred to our district...for Hamilton County teachers." The Network provides information on a variety of topics, including the teacher evaluation process, testing, classroom management and environment, parent

⁵⁴ New Teacher Center at the University of Memphis website; Accessed at <http://ntc.memphis.edu/> on July 13, 2006.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Vivian Gunn Morris, "Investment in New Teacher Center mentoring program pays huge dividend, study shows," Memphis Business Journal, March 10, 2006.

involvement, and curriculum. The more significant aspect of the program, however, is that every new teacher is assigned two tenured mentor teachers.⁵⁷

Because of teacher shortages in Tennessee, the state Department of Education is developing a coordinated teacher recruitment plan. However, teacher retention continues to be a problem.

NCLB Title II, Part A provides funding to states and districts to help them recruit and retain effective teachers so that all teachers hired to teach core academic subjects in Title I programs are highly qualified beginning in 2002-03. The U.S. Department of Education states that a "highly qualified teacher is one with full certification, a bachelor's degree and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching."⁵⁸ Federal law provides some flexibility in meeting the highly qualified teaching requirement in rural districts;

because many rural districts face limited teacher pools, rural districts have until 2006-07 to meet the requirements.⁵⁹ The state Department of Education recently requested a one year extension on meeting the federal requirement, acknowledging that there is no chance of meeting it this year.⁶⁰

Tennessee's recruitment efforts have had limited impact on high priority schools.

Based on NCLB requirements, Tennessee developed the "Tennessee Plan for Implementing the Teacher and Paraprofessional Quality Provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" in 2005. The document clearly defines "highly qualified teachers," sets a timeline for districts to have highly qualified teachers in all classrooms, and explains state changes to existing policies to meet the requirements. Tennessee's plan has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education as fulfilling federal requirements. However, the plan, as the federal law prescribes, focuses on licensure requirements and testing options that show demonstrated competency in a teacher's subject area. The plan does not address the problem of a limited qualified teaching pool, particularly in rural and poor districts, or of recruitment of new teachers.

A state initiative, Teach Tennessee, encourages mid-career professionals and retirees to go into teaching by offering the chance to "attend an intensive institute to learn teaching methods and then be eligible to teach in the coming fall, accompanied by an intensive mentoring program."⁶¹ Though it is unclear how much impact this initiative has had on recruiting more teachers, most of the district staff interviewed for this report either were not aware of it or felt it had little effect. Tennessee also has a "Transition to Teaching" initiative that pays recent graduates or mid-career professionals interested in teaching in critical shortage areas to fund alternative certification programs.⁶² The state also receives federal funds through the Troops to Teachers initiative, a U.S. Department of Education initiative aimed at helping military men and women begin a career as teachers. Though the program is laudable, its recruitment numbers are very low – 38 troops became teachers in 2005-06. Of these 38 teachers, 23 were placed in high priority districts (five of which were the districts with Improvement 2 schools reviewed for this study).⁶³

The Department of Education offers financial assistance for students to become special education teachers through its BASE-TN (Become a Special Educator in Tennessee) program. The program, whose purpose is to recruit more special education teachers in the state, offers tuition assistance to eligible individuals interested in acquiring the necessary special education teaching credentials. Twelve Tennessee colleges and universities participate in the BASE-TN program. In 2005-06, 349

⁵⁷ Hamilton County Department of Education website: <http://www.hcde.org/hr/ntn.htm>; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

⁵⁸ U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/teachers-faq.html>; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of Education, No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers, "Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements," Accessed at http://www.ed.gov/teachers/nclbguide/toolkit_pg10.html#requirements on September 13, 2006.

⁶⁰ Letter to Henry L. Johnson, United States Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, from Lana C. Seivers, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education, July 5, 2006.

⁶¹ Tennessee Department of Education website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/teachtn/>; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

⁶² Tennessee Department of Education website: <http://www.tnt2t.com/overview.aspx>; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

⁶³ Email to Katie Cour from Mike Schroeder, Director, Tennessee Troops for Teachers, Tennessee Department of Education, "Re: Troops to Teachers," October 18, 2006.

students in the state received tuition assistance through BASE-TN. Of these 349, 173 are currently employed as special education teachers in the state, working on full or alternative licensure.⁶⁴

In addition, the Department began the Minority Teaching Fellows Scholarship Program in 1989, which provides funding of up to \$5,000 a year per student for a maximum of 116 minority students. In exchange, students must agree to teach one year in Tennessee public schools for every year they receive scholarship funds. The program graduates approximately 25 to 30 students year.⁶⁵ The Department of Education must report annually to the General Assembly Education Subcommittees and the State Board of Education on the status of minority teachers in Tennessee. Though the report has consistently covered state initiatives – the Minority Teaching Fellows program in addition to other minority teaching grants and scholarships and other work with districts on minority recruitment – the 2005 report listed, for the fourth year in a row, the need for improved data on new hires, including better accounts of race and ethnicity.⁶⁶ In addition, the report does not include the status of these teachers after the first year of placement; that is, do minorities who have participated in these initiatives stay in teaching?

Each of these state programs has laudable intentions; however, the programs are not producing the kind of recruitment numbers necessary to combat Tennessee's teacher shortage problem. In part because of this, the state Department of Education has developed a central recruitment initiative that includes:

- Data collection and analysis of all current state recruitment programs;
- An agreement with Future Teachers of America to increase high school recruitment efforts;
- Incentive packages, including lower mortgage rates, moving expenses, and family relocation assistance, to encourage out-of-state teachers to relocate to Tennessee.

With the goal of improving the teacher retention rate to 75 percent, this central recruitment component is essential to Tennessee's recruitment efforts. Several of the components, including data collection and analysis, have been initiated; the final stages of the initiative are scheduled to conclude by August 31, 2007.

The State Board of Education's Master Plan includes the following goal: "The teaching profession will attract qualified individuals who complete strong professional preparation programs and continue to grow professionally." To fulfill this goal, the Board has developed several strategies, including addressing the teacher shortage problem by increasing scholarships and forgivable loans to promising potential teachers and by increasing the number of minority teachers by expanding the Minority Teaching Education Grant Program. In addition, the Board plans to provide increased opportunities for teaching as a second career and to promote the state's online jobs clearinghouse. Finally, the Board strategies include expanding the beginning teacher mentoring program to reduce teacher attrition. Total cost for these strategies is estimated by the Board as being \$3.2 million.⁶⁷

School principals want to provide incentive pay to better recruit teachers, but Tennessee lacks an incentive pay policy.

Many school principals mentioned the need for incentive pay for teachers in high priority schools, yet most Tennessee districts have not gone this route. According to the National Governors' Association, offering a variety of financial incentives is an effective recruitment strategy for states and districts.⁶⁸ Despite the lack of a Tennessee policy or statute on teacher pay incentives, at least two districts – Hamilton County and Memphis – offer financial incentives to recruit teachers using private funds.

⁶⁴ Email from Cleo Harris, Director, BASE-TN, Tennessee Department of Education, to Katie Cour, "BASE TN Info and Data Requestes," October 24, 2006.

⁶⁵ Report to the State Board of Education on the Status of Minority Classroom Teachers in Tennessee, Compiled by the Tennessee Department of Education, August 2005; Accessed at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/ciminority/doc/ciminorityteacherreport2005.pdf> on October 18, 2006.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ State Board of Education Master Plan, pp. 7, 23-24; Accessed at http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/MasterPlan_2006.pdf on July 13, 2006.

⁶⁸ National Governors' Association Issue Brief, "Recruiting and Retaining Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools," October 2005; Accessed at <http://www.teachingquality.org/pdfs/ngarecruitretain.pdf> on October 18, 2006.

Hamilton County pays a \$5,000 recruitment bonus to high-performing teachers who agree to teach in certain low-performing elementary and middle schools. Originally, a foundation grant from the Benwood Foundation funded the bonuses, but the district took over the cost when the grant ended in 2002. The district guaranteed to pay the bonuses only for five years, and some principals are concerned the initiative may end because of budget constraints. Memphis City Schools reconstituted five schools in 2005, entirely replacing existing staff. Teachers in these “Fresh Start” schools receive incentive pay based on accomplished goals. The district requires that incentive teams made up of district staff, school staff, and local union representatives meet with teachers to determine how the incentives – from \$500 to \$3,000 per teacher – will be distributed.⁶⁹

The state does not prohibit districts from offering financial incentive recruitment policies, but does not encourage it either. The General Assembly reviewed legislation in 2006 that would allow school boards to provide financial incentives for the purpose of recruiting math and science teachers; however, the legislation was withdrawn at the end of the session. The professional negotiations statute of Tennessee – *TCA §49-5-611* – makes salary a mandatory factor in negotiations, thereby requiring a local board to negotiate with a union before enacting a differential pay system.

Because Tennessee is surrounded by eight states, many principals and district officials mentioned the need to have competitive teacher salaries with nearby states. However, Tennessee already pays its teachers higher salaries than four neighboring states. It lags behind Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia in average teacher salary. Georgia is a particular concern, as Hamilton County officials stated that they lose teachers annually to North Georgia because of salary.⁷⁰ According to analysis by the State Treasurer’s Office, both Hamilton County and neighboring Bradley County experienced a net loss of more than 10 teachers from 1998 through 2002. The task force reports that “this is likely due to Georgia salary and recruitment.”⁷¹

Exhibit 9: Average Teacher Salary in Hamilton County and Neighboring Georgia Counties, 2004-05

County	Average Teacher Salary
Hamilton County, Tennessee	\$42,515
Walker County, Georgia	\$42,832
Dade County, Georgia	\$44,896
Catoosa County, Georgia	\$46,409
Murray County, Georgia	\$47,259
Whitfield County, Georgia	\$48,063
Fannin County, Georgia	\$49,574

SOURCES: 2004-05 State of Georgia K-12 Report Card, School System Reports; Tennessee Annual Statistical Report 2005

The following exhibit shows the average teacher salary in Tennessee and its bordering states:

Exhibit 10: Average Beginning Teacher Salaries in Tennessee and Neighboring States, 2003-04

State	Average Beginning Teacher Salary
Arkansas	\$26,129
North Carolina	\$27,572
Mississippi	\$28,106
Kentucky	\$28,416
Missouri	\$28,938
Tennessee	\$30,449
Alabama	\$30,973
Virginia	\$32,437
Georgia	\$35,116

SOURCE: American Federation of Teachers, Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2004

⁶⁹ Memphis City Schools, “Fresh Start Schools Incentives Program.”

⁷⁰ Interview with staff at the Hamilton County Department of Education, December 13, 2005.

⁷¹ Pensions and Insurance Task Force, State of Tennessee, “Observations of Retirement Patterns,” 2002.

Exhibit 11: Average Teacher Salaries in Tennessee and Neighboring States, 2003-04

State	Average Teacher Salary
Mississippi	\$36,217
Missouri	\$38,247
Alabama	\$38,282
Arkansas	\$39,226
Kentucky	\$39,831
Tennessee	\$40,318
North Carolina	\$43,211
Virginia	\$43,936
Georgia	\$45,848

SOURCE: American Federation of Teachers, Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2004

The Education Commission of the States writes: “States’ experience confirms that states and districts do successfully draw teachers from neighboring states and districts by paying higher beginning teacher salaries or offering attractive bonuses... Similarly, at least in the short term, salary bonuses for teaching in hard-to-staff schools have proved to be an effective incentive. There is no information, however, about whether teachers who receive such bonuses remain in their assignments for the long term.”⁷² The quality of the working environment remains at the top of requirements for teachers when they are looking for placement; it is doubtful that incentive pay could completely overcompensate for extremely poor working conditions, though it shows some promise in decreasing the critical shortage of teachers in low-performing schools.

The state does not have effective strategies to counter Tennessee’s teacher retention problem.

While continuing to focus on recruitment, the state also needs to look at retention. Nationally, teacher retention rates in the first five years of teaching fluctuate between 40 and 50 percent and Tennessee is no exception. Roughly 44 percent of Tennessee’s new teachers with no previous experience leave the profession within five years.⁷³ Some recruitment strategies, such as effective teacher mentoring and professional development, clearly help retention initiatives. However, the Education Commission of the States shows, through interviews with teachers who leave the profession, that other strategies are necessary. A key factor contributing to teacher attrition in some areas is classroom assignment. When teachers are assigned to classes for which they are not prepared, they are much more likely to become frustrated and feel unsupported. In addition, new teachers should not be placed in big classes with significant teaching challenges, which is sometimes the case in Tennessee districts. New teachers need smaller classes, consistent mentoring, and significant planning time.⁷⁴ These things are not happening consistently across the state.

Several states have instituted retention initiatives. In May 2006, the Florida legislature passed a bill that requires school districts to consider minority and economically disadvantaged student percentages in schools when assigning new teachers. In addition, school districts may not assign new teachers to schools graded “D” or “F” based on student performance. Several states, including Illinois, Maryland, and Iowa all passed legislation in 2006 requiring mentoring for teachers.⁷⁵

⁷² Education Commission of the States, *The Progress of Education Reform*, “Teacher Recruitment,” Vol. 2, No. 2, August-September 2000.

⁷³ Southern Regional Education Board, “2003 Study of Teacher Supply and Demand in Tennessee,” 2003.

⁷⁴ Education Commission of the States, Education Policy Issue Site: Teaching Quality—Recruitment and Retention, accessed at <http://ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/issue.asp?issueID=129> on November 6, 2006.

⁷⁵ Education Commission of the States, “Recent State Policies/Activities; Teaching Quality—Induction and Mentoring,” accessed at <http://ecs.org/ecs/ecscat.nsf/WebTopicView?OpenView&RestrictToCategory=Teaching+Quality--Induction+and+Mentoring> on November 6, 2006.

The state’s tenure law appears to protect some poorly qualified teachers; firing an ineffective teacher remains arduous, time-consuming, and costly.

The Tennessee Tenure Teacher Act states that teachers are eligible for tenure after three years of teaching under probation. *TCA §49-5-511* explains the reasons a teacher may be dismissed: “incompetence, inefficiency, neglect of duty, unprofessional conduct and insubordination.”⁷⁶ More specifically, a teacher may be dismissed if charged with “conduct unbecoming to a member of the teaching community,” such as “a) immorality; b) conviction of a felony or a crime involving moral turpitude; c) dishonesty, unreliability, continued willful failure or refusal to pay one’s just and honest debts; d) disregard of the Code of Ethics of the Tennessee Education

Association in such a manner as to make one obnoxious as a member of the profession; or e) improper use of narcotics or intoxicants.”⁷⁷ According to the law, district superintendents may suspend a teacher at any time pending investigation. The teacher will be offered a due process hearing before the local board of education. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the teacher may appeal the board’s decision in chancery court.⁷⁸ Because local boards determine tenured teacher dismissals in Tennessee, the state Department of Education has no record of the number of teachers who have been dismissed, or the reasons for their dismissals.

Metro Nashville Public Schools staff explained that three types of actions can occur when a teacher receives a poor evaluation: reprimand, suspension, or dismissal. However, the staff indicated that the most common response to a poor evaluation is reprimand. To dismiss a teacher, the district must have an often-costly hearing, leaving the district to go after only a few of the worst teachers. District officials stated that from a principal’s standpoint, a dismissal is time-consuming and difficult. District staff try to emphasize that principals should focus on the probationary period – three years – for reprimands and other actions. School and district officials interviewed for this report implied that this barrier to removing poorly qualified teachers is a significant hindrance in their school improvement efforts.

Despite their valuable purpose to ensure administrative fairness toward teaching staff, tenure laws tend to have significant negative effects on teacher accountability.

In an investigative report called “The Hidden Costs of Tenure,” journalist Scott Reeder uncovered some startling facts about teacher tenure and firing incompetent teachers. Some of his findings, based on the Illinois teacher population, include:

- Of the 95,000 tenured teachers in the state of Illinois, only two a year on average are fired for incompetence;
- Only five teachers a year on average are fired for misconduct, such as physical or sexual abuse of students;
- From 1995-2005, over 80 percent of Illinois school districts gave a tenured teacher an “unsatisfactory” rating;
- In the past 18 years, only six percent of districts attempted to fire a tenured teacher.⁷⁹

Reeder writes: “Despite denials from the state’s two major teacher unions, the data indicates that tenure has evolved into near total job protection that mocks the goal of accountability. The greatest abuses of this system are often in the poorest school districts.” According to Reeder, the hearing process itself can take several years, and often costs upwards of \$100,000. Reeder explains that the hearings are rarely argued on the merits of the teacher; instead, they are based on whether the procedures for evaluation and recommendation for removal were followed correctly.⁸⁰

So why have tenure? The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute states that tenure has two purposes: “First, tenure exists to protect competent and productive teachers from unconstitutional,

⁷⁶ *T.C.A. §49-5-511 (2).*

⁷⁷ *T.C.A. §49-5-501(3).*

⁷⁸ *T.C.A. §49-5-513.*

⁷⁹ Scott Reeder, “The Hidden Costs of Tenure,” Small Newspaper Group, 2005.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

unlawful, arbitrary, and capricious employment actions. A tenured teacher can be dismissed from employment only for cause(s) enumerated in state law...Second, the dismissal of a tenured teacher can occur only in accordance with prescribed procedures. As with cause, these procedures are specified in state statutory law."⁸¹ Proponents of tenure argue that tenure is necessary to attract new teachers to the profession because it protects teachers from biased, untrained evaluators.

The Tennessee Education Association, which represents most of the state's classroom teachers, staunchly supports the state's 1951 tenure law. Labeling it one of the state's most misunderstood laws, TEA lobbyist Jerry Winters sums up the law's effect: it says that a teacher has to teach three years and be rehired for a fourth year before getting tenure, which guarantees that a teacher cannot be fired after that third year without due process. "It does not protect incompetent teachers," Winters said. "It just protects teachers from political firings and nepotism and just basic mistreatment."⁸²

CONCLUSIONS: STUDENT DISCIPLINE, ATTENDANCE, AND DROPOUT

Though Tennessee has one of the lowest graduation rates in the country, the state does not adequately assist districts with graduation rate data and does not have a comprehensive state dropout plan.

According to Kids Count, an annual profile of child well-being findings that includes many education indicators, Tennessee ranks 45th in the country in the percent of teens who are high school dropouts – 11 percent. Only four states – Arizona, New Mexico, Georgia, and Indiana – have a higher dropout rate than Tennessee. Kids Count defines dropouts as "[t]eenagers between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in high school and are not high school graduates."⁸³ Alliance for Excellent Education, an organization that promotes high school reform, ranks Tennessee 42nd in the nation in high school graduation rates, using the definition for graduation rate as the number of students reported as not having graduated on time.⁸⁴ The

Manhattan Institute ranks Tennessee 43rd in the state in high school graduation.⁸⁵ Depending on the definition, Tennessee has a range in dropouts, but in all cases the state falls in the bottom fifth of the nation.

Because of the link between a high school diploma and financial success, coupled with NCLB requirements, states are increasing their focus on graduation rates.

A high school diploma is increasingly becoming a necessity for financial success in the U.S. Without a diploma, teenagers find it difficult to obtain high-paying jobs, especially with the 21st century focus on advanced and technical skills in the workplace. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that full-time workers who graduated from high school earn on average \$30,400 compared to \$23,400 for their peers who do not have a high school diploma.⁸⁶ Job satisfaction is also linked to education. In a University of

⁸¹ Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, "Teacher Tenure Under Fire," CEPI Education Law Newsletter, Dr. Richard S. Vacca, Editor, Senior Fellow, CEPI, 2003.

⁸² American School Board Journal, December 2000 Before the Board; Accessed at <http://www.asbj.com/2000/12/1200beforetheboard.html> on July 13, 2006.

⁸³ Kids Count State Level Data website: http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/sld/compare_results.jsp?i=440&dt=2&yr=5&s=n&dtype=&x=167&y=10; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

⁸⁴ Alliance for Excellent Education website: http://www.all4ed.org/press/pr_022806.html#chart; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

⁸⁵ Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, "Leaving Boys Behind: Public High School Graduation Rates," The Manhattan Institute, April 2006, accessed at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_48_t2.htm on October 9, 2006.

⁸⁶ Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Eric C. Newburger, "The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings," Current Population Reports, U.S. Census Bureau, July 2002, p. 2; Accessed at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf> on July 13, 2006.

Tennessee report, *Understanding Tennesseans' Attitudes about Education*, the authors found that college graduates in Tennessee are more satisfied with their jobs than those with less education.⁸⁷

NCLB uses graduation rates as an indicator of school and district success. According to the law, states must set growth targets to improve their graduation rates by 2013-14, at which point all schools are expected to meet their federally-approved target. State graduation rate targets range from 50 percent (Nevada) to 100 percent (Tennessee).⁸⁸ The majority of states – 35 – have set graduation rate targets that do not change through 2013-14 (the year all schools must meet AYP). That is, the state's graduation rate target this year is 65 percent and remains 65 percent through the 2013-14 school year. Thirteen states have increasingly higher targets each year as they work toward their goals in 2013-14. For example, Kentucky has an 80 percent graduation rate target for 2006, with increases to: 82.25 percent (2007), 84.5 percent (2008), 89 percent (2010), 93.5 percent (2012), and 98 percent (2014).⁸⁹ Three states – Tennessee, Iowa, and Kansas – have set targets until 2013-14, at which point their targets increase. Tennessee has a set graduation rate target of 90 percent each year until 2013-14, when it jumps to 100 percent.

Policy options for dealing with dropout problems are confounded by the fact that there are several ways to measure graduation and dropout rates, and different states, organizations and entities use different definitions.

NCLB defines graduation rate as “the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years.”⁹⁰ However, putting this definition into operation results in varying forms of calculating a graduation rate. The following exhibit, adapted from a National Association of Secondary School Principals report, explains the most common methods of calculation and lists the states that use those methods:

Exhibit 12: State Definitions Used to Calculate Graduation Rates as of April 2005

Graduation Rate Definition	Description of Method	Advantages of the Method	Disadvantages of the Method	States that Use the Method
<i>Cohort Definition</i>	Rate based on the number of students starting in 9 th grade who graduate from high school four years later	An accurate, detailed method that tracks individual students as they move in and out of school	Relies on strong individual student data and good tracking system	-12- Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi New York, South Carolina, Texas, Washington
<i>Departure Classification Definition</i>	Rate based on the count of high school graduates minus dropouts over four years	No detailed individual tracking system required; data available from NCES; recommended by the U.S. Department of Education	Relies on questionable dropout data; NCES data includes high school completion credentials (except GED), which is in conflict with NCLB requirements	-30- Alabama, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee , Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming

SOURCE: National Association of Secondary School Principals, “What Counts: Defining and Improving High School Graduation Rates,” 2005; GAO, “Education Could Do More to Help States Better Define Graduation Rates and Improve Knowledge about Intervention Strategies,” 2006.

⁸⁷ Dr. William F. Fox, Brad Kiser, and Stacia Couch, *Understanding Tennesseans' Attitudes about Education*, the University of Tennessee, Center for Business and Economic Research, February 2006, p. 34; Accessed at <http://cber.utk.edu/pubs/wff231.pdf> on September 12, 2006.

⁸⁸ Education Commission of the States StateNotes, “State Graduation Rate Goals for High School Accountability;” Accessed at <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=865> on July 13, 2006.

⁸⁹ Education Commission of the States StateNotes “NCLB – Adequate Yearly Progress;” Accessed at <http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/57/50/5750.doc> on July 13, 2006.

⁹⁰ No Child Left Behind Act, Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(vi).

Eight additional states – Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and North Carolina – use various other methods to define graduation rates.⁹¹

The departure classification method – currently used by 30 states including Tennessee – has been criticized for its reliance on often questionable dropout data, particularly because student mobility, or transfers to another school or district, is so difficult to track. A GAO report elaborates: “Some inaccuracies may lead to the reporting of lower graduation rates, such as recording all students with ‘unknown’ status as dropouts or counting students who drop out, return to school, and then drop out again as a dropout each time, as may happen in schools in states that use the departure classification definition.”⁹² Though NCLB requires that states use a graduation rate method that takes into account transfer students and ensures that they are not counted as dropouts, states still have problems with student mobility data.⁹³ By 2007-08, 13 of the 30 states using the departure classification method and five of the eight states using other methods will switch to the cohort method, the definition often preferred by statisticians and research specialists as being more accurate. The result is 29 states using the cohort method (including Tennessee), 18 using the departure classification method, and three using various other methods by the 2007-08 school year.⁹⁴ Tennessee’s switch to the cohort definition for graduation rate should improve its data. In 2005, all 50 governors signed the National Governors Association’s Graduation Counts Compact, committing each state to a common method of calculating graduation rates. This agreement should help eliminate some of the current problems surrounding graduation rate calculations.

Though common data inaccuracies in graduation rates require ongoing assessment, neither the U.S. Department of Education nor Tennessee’s Department of Education audit graduation data.

A recent GAO report found that the U.S. Department of Education could do more to assist states with graduation rates. The report found that, while the U.S. Department of Education has partially addressed graduation rate data inaccuracies, it has not effectively assessed the states’ various data tracking devices. In response, the Department stated that the systems needed to be in place for several years before accurate assessments could take place. However, as GAO illustrates, this lack of accountability for the data could lead to serious inaccuracies.⁹⁵ In addition, the report found that the Department is not relaying effective intervention strategies to reduce dropouts to the states.

Additionally, more than half of states – including Tennessee – do not audit their districts’ graduation rate data.⁹⁶ Without data verification, districts may be reporting inaccurate rates, affecting their AYP status. Most Tennessee School Improvement 2 high schools are on the high priority list at least in part because of their graduation rates. Absent state auditing and data verification, the districts are vulnerable to failing to meet AYP for false reasons.

Tennessee districts may also be confused about state Department-approved methods for cleaning up dropout data, based on Metro Nashville Public Schools’ experiences. MNPS officials reported that the Department’s Accountability Division and Department staff in charge of attendance manuals and reports have given the district conflicting information about how to report data for dropouts who re-enter school then dropout again.⁹⁷ According to the Department, the district is allowed to clean up

⁹¹ United States Government Accountability Office, “No Child Left Behind Act: Education Could Do More to Help States Better Define Graduation Rates and Improve Knowledge about Intervention Strategies,” GAO-05-879, September 2005, p. 18; Accessed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05879.pdf> on July 13, 2006.

⁹² Ibid., p. 24.

⁹³ Education Commission of the States StateNotes, “State Graduation Rate Goals for High School Accountability;” Accessed at <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=865> on July 13, 2006.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ United States Government Accountability Office, “No Child Left Behind Act: Education Could Do More to Help States Better Define Graduation Rates and Improve Knowledge about Intervention Strategies,” Report Summary, GAO-05-879, September 2005; Accessed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05879.pdf> on July 13, 2006.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

⁹⁷ Interview with staff from Metro Nashville Public Schools, December 13, 2005.

graduation data for the purposes of calculating AYP, but the Department may not be making this clear to districts.⁹⁸

States have employed a variety of actions to try to prevent dropouts, with the most common being sanctions on driving privileges.

The Education Commission of the States reports that 24 states have a law that ties driver's licenses to school attendance and/or achievement. In this area, Tennessee takes a leading role with *TCA §49-6-3017*. According to law, the state must deny a driver's license to anyone under 18 years old who has not graduated from high school or who cannot present documentation that he/she is:

1. enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a GED program;
2. enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a high school; or
3. excused from such requirements for circumstances beyond the student's control.⁹⁹

Though Tennessee should be recognized as leading the way in this area, research is unclear as to whether tying attendance and achievement to driver's licensing privileges actually reduces dropouts.

In 1997, the legislature passed *TCA §49-1-520*, the Model Dropout Prevention Program, which establishes up to 10 model programs that districts can implement using Department of Education state grants of \$6,000. Though this initiative is laudable, more action to reduce dropouts is needed.

Texas, for example, has developed a Dropout Prevention Clearinghouse that consists of reports, information on effective dropout prevention programs, information on available funding for dropout prevention, and contact information for the state education agency.¹⁰⁰ This one-stop shop makes accessing information easy for districts, administrators, and parents.

Throughout the south, state policies vary on ways to reduce dropouts. A 2001 SREB report indicates that only three of 16 southeastern states require summer school for failing students (Delaware, Louisiana, and South Carolina); however, 11 of the states have guidelines for assisting failing students. Tennessee, however, is not one of these.¹⁰¹

Assisting students with the transition to high school – as opposed to retaining low-performing 9th graders – shows promise in reducing dropout rates.

All five districts with Improvement 2 schools have concentrated efforts to prevent dropouts by improving the transition to high school for students entering the 9th grade. Research indicates that this practice is preferable to 9th grade retention.¹⁰² School districts have developed smaller learning communities in high school and by targeting interventions to struggling students in 9th grade.

In Metro Nashville Public Schools, area high schools are working with the district to apply for a Smaller Learning Communities federal grant to help develop schools-within-a-school for 9th graders. Possible uses for the grant include increasing guidance counselors for freshmen, reorganizing classrooms so 9th graders are located together, and having a 9th grade "safe place" for student information and counseling. MNPS officials are modeling their application after Hamilton County, which received the grant beginning in 2003.

Education policy in the 1990s often focused on a call to end social promotion, the promoting of students to the next grade based on their age rather than mastery of grade-level skills. The upward trend in the dropout rate, however, has caused some education analysts to reconsider this position. One study, for example, found that "repeating 9th grade is perhaps the strongest risk factor towards dropping out," and another found that up to 80 percent of retained 9th graders will drop out of school.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Email from Connie Smith to Katie Cour, "Re: Finding for Report," June 28, 2006.

⁹⁹ *T.C.A. §49-6-3017*.

¹⁰⁰ Texas Education Agency website: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/dpchse/>; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Southern Regional Education Board, "Finding Alternatives to Failure: Can States End Social Promotion and Reduce Retention Rates?" January 2001, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Quoted from "What Counts: Defining and Improving High School Graduation Rates," National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2005, p. 15.

The Tennessee Board of Education developed guidelines for promotion and retention that instructs districts to consider grade level when retaining students, and specifically states that “retention is most appropriate in the early grades.”¹⁰⁴

The quality of alternative schools varies greatly across districts; some schools are not adequately serving the needs of students suspended or expelled, while others show promising practices.

Under state law, local boards of education must establish at least one alternative school to serve students in grades 7-12 who have been suspended or expelled from regular schools.¹⁰⁵ The five Tennessee districts with Improvement 2 schools have a total of 25 alternative schools (three in Metro Nashville, one in Fayette County, three in Knox County, one in Hamilton County, and 17 in Memphis City). The districts’ approaches to alternative education, including their staffing of, resources for, and methods of behavioral management and academic instruction, vary widely, along with the overall quality of the schools. Some systems, such as Memphis City, operate promising programs; however, alternative schools in

some systems are accurately described by principals as “holding stations.” Such programs lack adequate academic instruction, counseling services, and facilities, offering little hope that the students they serve will make academic or behavioral improvements.¹⁰⁶

In June 2006, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter 895, which makes several substantive changes concerning alternative schools. First, it creates an advisory council for alternative education responsible for advising, assisting, and consulting with the governor, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education on alternative education issues. The legislation requires the council to study alternative education programs or curricula implemented in Tennessee school systems to determine the effectiveness of such programs or curricula, to consider the rules of governance of alternative school and make recommendations concerning such, and make an annual report to the governor, the education committees of the senate and the house of representatives, the commissioner of education, and the state board of education prior to February 1 each year, among other duties. In addition, Senate Joint Resolution 746 of 2004 directed the Office of Education Accountability to study alternative schools and report to the Oversight Committee on Education by April 2005.

Principals in the five districts typically discussed two areas of concern for alternative schools – student placement/eligibility and behavior services received by students in alternative schools.

Tennessee law mandates that districts with students in grades 7-12 provide at least one alternative school, though some districts provide them for younger students as well. Fayette County, however, has only one alternative school. The principal of Central Elementary, which serves grades preK-6, indicates that this limits her options in dealing with students’ chronic and serious behavior problems.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, principals at some other Improvement 2 schools sometimes hesitate to send a young child to an alternative school, even when one exists.

Some principals note that because alternative school attendance is voluntary and transportation is not required, some students refuse to attend, which may put them further behind in school. In some cases, districts have transferred students to other schools rather than placing them in alternative schools, a frustration to some principals.

¹⁰⁴ State Board of Education policy, 3.300; Accessed at <http://tennessee.gov/sbe/Policies/3.300%20Promotion%20and%20Retention.pdf> on July 13, 2006.

¹⁰⁵ T.C.A. §49-6-3402.

¹⁰⁶ Comptroller of the Treasury, *Tennessee’s Alternative Schools*, John G. Morgan, Office of Education Accountability, Office of the Comptroller, State of Tennessee, April 2005, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Sandra Bryant, principal, Central Elementary, Fayette County Schools, Jan. 31, 2006.

Several principals complain about the adequacy of behavioral services at alternative schools. In theory, alternative schools would employ a high number of counselors and support staff to deal with students' behavioral problems; however, many principals suggest that systems do not adequately staff the schools. In a recent OEA survey, staff found that roughly 10 percent of Tennessee alternative schools rarely or never provide support services to students and 30 percent of schools offer these services only occasionally.¹⁰⁸ One principal indicated that the district's worst teachers end up in the alternative schools. Another said that alternative schools function more like holding cells than schools because of their lack of interventions and their "babysitting" approach.¹⁰⁹

Despite the problems with existing alternative schools, several districts have developed related optional services and programs that demonstrate promise.

Some promising services for alternative school students include Metro Nashville's New Beginnings school for students with chronic behavior problems; the state's five Middle College programs, including one in Nashville, for students who, for various reasons unrelated to discipline, need an alternative, more supportive environment; Fayette County's parental involvement initiative aimed at parents of alternative school students; and district programs with varying degrees of alternative placement.

In January 2005, Metro Nashville Public Schools started the New Beginnings school for students with chronic behavior problems. The school provided an alternative atmosphere for learning with teachers and guidance counselors specifically trained to deal with more challenging students.¹¹⁰ Several principals interviewed for this study reported difficulties in working with students who have chronic behavior problems. Often the students do not meet alternative school criteria, but are too disruptive to remain in regular classrooms.

In less than a year of its inception, Metro Nashville closed New Beginnings. Both community and school board members complained from its opening that the cost was too high and that funds would be better spent on school-based strategies, such as in-school suspension and an increased number of guidance counselors.¹¹¹ Some principals, however, were disappointed in the closure and the Citizens Panel of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce also supported the school.¹¹²

In 2005, Metro Nashville began collaborating with Nashville State Community College to develop Middle College High School, a school for students who need a different atmosphere than regular schools provide in grades 10 through 12 – administrators, however, emphasize that it is not for students with disciplinary problems.¹¹³ These schools, located on college campuses, are academically rigorous while simultaneously offering supportive and alternative learning environments.¹¹⁴ Memphis City Schools and Hamilton County Schools also offer Middle College High Schools, and principals generally express support for the programs.

Despite some weaknesses in its alternative school, Fayette County initiated a promising parental involvement initiative. Once a student is assigned to the district's alternative school, both the parent and the student sign a contract with school officials outlining behavioral expectations during the student's time at the school. The contract requires parents to meet once a month with the regular school principals, and students must meet with the principal twice a week to report their progress at the alternative school. The high school principal indicated the student recidivism rate declined following the introduction of this policy, although could not provide data to support this.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Comptroller of the Treasury, *Tennessee's Alternative Schools*, John G. Morgan, Office of Education Accountability, Office of the Comptroller, State of Tennessee, April 2005, p. 23.

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with staff at Metro Nashville Public Schools, December 13, 2005.

¹¹⁰ MNPS memo to School Board Members Dec. 17, 2004; Accessed at: <http://www.mnps.org/Page1873.aspx> on July 13, 2006.

¹¹¹ Metro Nashville Public Schools Board of Education, Conversation with the Director, March 15, 2005.

¹¹² 2004 Citizens Panel for a Community Report Card, p. 35; Accessed at: <http://www.nashvillechamber.com/education/0304report.pdf> on July 13, 2006.

¹¹³ Metro Nashville Public Schools website: <http://www.mchs.mnps.org/site70.aspx>; Accessed on July 13, 2006.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Telephone interview with Charles Earle, Principal, Fayette-Ware comprehensive high School, June 15, 2006.

Finally, some principals expressed interest in providing varying degrees of alternative placement, such as one program for extremely disruptive students/zero tolerance violators, one program for mild but chronic behavior problem students, and one for students at risk of dropping out. One Metro Nashville school is asking the district to fund an on-site suspension center that would include tutors and counselors.¹¹⁶ Memphis City began offering three levels of alternative schools in 2005-06: zero tolerance schools, success schools, and choice schools. Students' individual and behavioral needs determine their placement. Students enrolled in the eight zero tolerance schools, five of which are high schools, have been expelled from their regular school. Students typically receive academic and behavior management instruction and remain in the program for one year. Students enrolled in one of the five success schools have not been expelled from their regular school but instead are referred by a guidance counselor or other school official because of identified academic and/or behavioral issues in the regular school environment. Similar to success schools, students enrolled in choice schools have not been expelled from their regular school but instead may apply to attend one of the three schools, which feature small class sizes and individualized instruction.

CONCLUSIONS: INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

All five districts face challenges implementing the NCLB-required supplemental educational services to low-performing students. Student participation is low in every district and it is unclear whether these services will improve student achievement.

Federal law requires districts with schools that have failed to meet AYP goals for three consecutive years to oversee the provision of additional tutoring services, called supplemental educational services (SES), for low-income students – at the same time, the law prohibits the districts themselves from providing such services and requires them to set aside up to 20 percent of their Title I funds to pay providers.¹¹⁷ The Tennessee Department of Education is responsible for approving provider applications, maintaining a list of providers, and, ultimately, determining whether the provider services are improving student learning. Tennessee school district responsibilities include:

- notifying and informing parents of eligible students about available tutoring services at least annually;
- helping parents choose a provider, if requested;
- determining which students should receive services if not all can be served (because of limited funding); and
- entering into agreements with and paying providers.¹¹⁸

Student participation in supplemental education services is low across the state.

SES participation rates are low in Tennessee, as shown in Exhibit 13, and student enrollment in many schools that must offer SES is often sparse.¹¹⁹ Other states' participation rates are low as well. The Center on Education Policy estimates that nationally only about 20 percent of students eligible for SES actually received tutoring in 2005-06.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Interview with principal and staff at McGavock Comprehensive High School, January 30, 2006.

¹¹⁷ Some of the 20 percent must also be used to pay for school choice-related transportation services, which districts with schools failing AYP for two years are required to provide.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education, No Child Left Behind, *Supplemental Educational Services: Non-Regulatory Guidance*, June 13, 2005, p. 21.

¹¹⁹ Ericka Mellon, "Free tutoring for Austin-East often goes unused," *Knoxville News Sentinel* (online), January 21, 2006; Accessed at http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/436130/free_tutoring_for_austineast_often_goes_unused/index.html on September 13, 2006.

¹²⁰ Center on Education Policy, *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act*, March 2006, p. 131.

Tennessee's 2005-06 SES participation rates range from zero percent in Fayette County to a high of 33 percent in Metro Nashville, the only district with rates exceeding the national average.¹²¹ Metro school officials surmise that participation will increase once services have been in place for a longer period of time due to word of mouth and greater parental understanding of the benefits to students. Hamilton County officials report that about 14 percent of the district's eligible students participate in SES, most of them at the elementary level. According to the state Department of Education, lack of participation stems in part from a lack of available or convenient transportation after the tutoring sessions.¹²²

Exhibit 13: School Districts Required to Offer Supplemental Education Services, Number of Students Eligible and Number (and Percent) Participating for School Years 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06

School Districts Required to Offer SES	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06	
	Eligible	Participating	Eligible	Participating	Eligible	Participating
Metro Nashville	274	251 (92%)	279	203 (73%)	2,293	762 (33.5%)
Fayette County ¹²³	0	0	0	0	1,450	0 (0%)
Hamilton County	3,743	405 (11%)	2,221	338 (15%)	4,288	592 (14%)
Knox County	343	67 (19.5%)	317	27 (8.5%)	607	85 (14%)
Memphis City	30,113	2,800 (9%)	27,378	2,331 (8.5%)	20,886	2,178 (10%)

SOURCE: Tennessee Department of Education, Email to Jessica Lewis from Carol Groppe, "Re: SEs workshop," April 21, 2006.

The low participation rates may mean that parents of eligible students do not understand their options under the program or that they are unable to access the services as designed. Reasons may include transportation or notification issues (for more about notification, see the next section). Although some providers are able to tutor students at their schools, others provide services off-site. Under NCLB, districts may provide transportation to service providers, but are not required to do so. (Also, if a district chooses to provide transportation, the cost may not be counted toward satisfying the LEA's obligation to spend up to the required 20 percent of its Title I funds.) Some parents may have difficulty accessing these services for their children because of their own transportation or schedule limitations.

Districts face challenges implementing the requirement that parents and families be notified of available supplemental education services.

As required under NCLB, the five Tennessee districts use several methods to inform students' parents about providers' tutoring services, including mailing information packets, providing information on district and school web sites, holding provider fairs at schools, conducting parent forums, placing on-site SES coordinators at each affected school, and allowing on-line enrollment.

¹²¹ In fact, MNPS numbers would have been as high as 39 percent, except that 123 eligible students opted out of the services in December when their selected provider discontinued services—their parents chose to have the students then receive tutoring services through a School Improvement Plan Funds Grant, whereby transportation home was provided.

¹²² Email to Kim Potts from Carol Groppe, Consultant, Tennessee Department of Education, "Re: Questions about SES and school choice," July 6, 2006.

¹²³ According to the state Department of Education, "Fayette County has 21st Century tutoring programs after school, in which students are participating. When schools were required to offer supplemental educational services, parents already had their children in tutoring programs, and no parents opted for the SES tutoring." Email to Kim Potts from Carol Groppe, "Re: Questions about SES and school choice," July 6, 2006.

However, information about SES providers, no matter how well-organized and effectively distributed, may be difficult for parents, unused to making these kinds of choices, to wade through with a strong feeling of certainty. Hamilton County provides a booklet that lists all providers under these categories: In-Home Tutoring, Off-Site Tutoring, Tutoring in the Schools, On-Line Tutoring, and Locations to be Determined (providers in this category were still looking for space when the booklet was printed). The schools each provider serves are listed along with a brief explanation and contact information for each program. The first portion of the HCDE booklet contains a list of questions and answers about SES, including contact names and phone numbers of persons for each school that is eligible to participate. Some language excerpted from various providers (not identified here) follows:

“Our curriculum is research-based, engaging and fun so that it captures and keeps students’ interest while ensuring student learning.”

“A curriculum which is both spiral and sequential, moves at an accelerated pace to teach and test specific skills.”

“Our reading and math programs focus on the unique needs of each student and include individual attention, customized instruction, and qualified teachers.”

“The materials are fun and motivational, and they result in student achievement gains.”

The language is not difficult per se (although it does contain some off-putting education jargon), but it may not help parents come to a firm decision about which program would best suit their children. Participation rates may be low in part because, lacking previous experience in making this kind of choice, many parents may decide simply to do nothing. The district is required to provide assistance, but some parents may not ask for help.

The Tennessee Department of Education monitors the parental notification requirement and has made revisions to some districts’ parental notification letters to meet federal requirements. The Department also reviews the parental notification letters to ensure that the process allows for parental response, allows sufficient time for parents to select a provider, and includes appropriate information about the providers.¹²⁴

The Tennessee Department of Education faces challenges in monitoring supplemental service providers and determining their impact on student achievement.

The most pressing issue regarding SES is whether it is working as it is meant to – that is, whether student achievement levels are increasing as a result of the additional tutoring services. Responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of SES actually falls on state education agencies, as indicated by the U.S. Department of Education’s non-regulatory guidance document on supplemental educational services issued in June 2005. The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) is required to:

- Identify and maintain a list of approved service providers.
- Develop and implement standards and techniques for monitoring the quality, performance, and effectiveness of the services offered by approved providers.
- Determine whether providers improve student academic achievement.¹²⁵

School Choice Requirements Under NCLB
Districts must provide the option of transferring to another school in the second year that schools fail to achieve AYP, one year before SES must begin if schools continue to fail. As in most other states, the five Tennessee districts with Improvement 2 schools have had relatively few students requesting transfer to other schools. Of Memphis City’s 34,307 eligible students for public school choice, only 1,901 transferred schools in 2005-06.¹ Nationally, only 1.6 percent of the students eligible to exercise the choice option did so in the 2005-06 school year. The percentage has remained relatively stable since choice was initially offered in 2003-04.²

Research suggests that parents often refuse the transfer option because they prefer sending their children to schools close to home.³ The number of student transfers may also be affected by options some districts offer that are unrelated to and in some systems may predate NCLB, such as open enrollment and magnet schools. The opening of charter schools in both Memphis and Nashville also may affect student transfers. In addition, transportation may or may not be available to the transferring student.

¹ Tennessee Department of Education – Numbers of Students Transferring Under the Public School Choice Option Tennessee.
² Center on Education Policy, From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act, March 2006, p. 117.
³ Public Education Network, Open to the Public: The Public Speaks Out on No Child Left Behind – A Summary of Nine Hearings, September 2005 – January 2006, Public Education Network NCLB Hearing Report, May 2006, p. 13.

¹²⁴ Email to Kim Potts from Carol Groppe, “Re: Questions about SES and school choice,” July 6, 2006.

¹²⁵ U.S. Department of Education, *Supplemental Educational Services: Non-Regulatory Guidance*, June 13, 2005, p. 18.

Providers may include community agencies, LEAs that are not identified as high priority, public schools that are not identified as high priority, charter schools, private schools, after-school programs, child care centers, libraries, community colleges, private companies, on-line schools, family literacy/Even Start programs, and faith-based organizations. Services must be academic and must target reading, language arts, and/or mathematics.

The Tennessee Department of Education began maintaining an approved provider list in 2002-03. Its detailed provider application is adapted from and closely adheres to a toolkit developed and distributed in 2002 by the Council of Chief State School Officers.¹²⁶ Prospective providers must supply the Department with information including the minimum and maximum number of students they will be able to serve, whether public transportation is available to the tutoring site, the mode of instructional delivery, the cost/fee structure, incentives supplied for participants, as well as evidence of effectiveness and connection to state academic standards and district instructional programs. In 2006, the state has approved 48 providers either fully or conditionally. (Conditional approval means that an entity has not yet established a proven track record, but shows proof that it has the capability of doing so.)

Fulfilling the requirements concerning monitoring and determining provider effectiveness will be a challenging task for the Tennessee Department of Education, an outlook currently shared by many, if not most, states.¹²⁷ According to the state Department of Education, the state monitors the effectiveness of supplemental education services through a detailed instrument that relies on interviews with school personnel, providers, and families of eligible students.¹²⁸ In a Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) conference call on the monitoring and evaluating of SES programs, a Tennessee Department of Education representative stated that the Department is facing problems with evaluating the various supplemental service providers. The transcript states: "As usual, we're a little frustrated...with our lack of capacity...I think one of the greatest challenges that we have is trying to troubleshoot at the same time we're building the infrastructure. The problems come in before we're getting into place things that we need to have to resolve them."¹²⁹

The Department is working with the Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis to develop an effective method of assessing and evaluating supplemental educational providers, in particular how the services are impacting student achievement. According to the state Department of Education, CREP is currently collecting data through surveys of school personnel and families of eligible students and will submit an annual report to the Department. Department staff plan to provide this information to families of eligible students to help them make decisions about selecting a provider.¹³⁰

High priority districts are prohibited from offering supplemental education services and instead must contract these services.

No Child Left Behind Section 1116(e)(12)(i) requires a supplemental education service provider to have a demonstrated record of effectiveness in increasing student achievement; by this definition, the U.S. Department of Education states that districts labeled in need of improvement are prohibited from

¹²⁶ See www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/SSPToolkit.pdf for the CCSSO Toolkit. See also the Tennessee Department of Education's provider application form at tennessee.gov/education/fedprog/doc/fpsupplementalapp.doc. A list of Tennessee state-approved providers is available at tennessee.gov/education/fedprog/doc/fptennesseeessp.pdf. (All web sites accessible as of September 13, 2006.)

¹²⁷ Dennis Pearce, "NASBE and eSN present: Supplemental Educational Services – How states (and schools) are dealing with the new rules," *eSchool News online*, not dated; Accessed at www.eschoolnews.com/resources/reports/ses/index.cfm on September 13, 2006. See also Jeffrey H. Cohen, "Supplemental Services: Theory vs. Practice," *Education Week*, May 24, 2006.

¹²⁸ Tennessee Department of Education Attachment B - Monitoring Instrument for Supplemental Educational Services -High Priority Title I Schools School Year 2005-2006; Accessed at <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/fedprog/doc/fpbsesspmi.doc> on July 13, 2006.

¹²⁹ Council of Chief State School Officers transcript of conference call, Moderator: Ayeola Fortune, April 6, 2006, pp. 19, 23; Accessed at http://www.ccsso.org/content/PDFs/Audioconference_Transcript.pdf on July 13, 2006.

¹³⁰ Email to Kim Potts from Carol Groppe, "Re: Questions about SES and school choice," July 6, 2006.

offering these services themselves: "If an LEA is in need of improvement or corrective action, the LEA may not be a supplemental educational service provider."¹³¹

Both Hamilton County and Metro Nashville district officials would prefer that they be allowed to provide their own supplemental educational services for students, something the U.S. Department of Education has approved for Chicago, Boston, and Anchorage, and may yet approve for other requesting urban districts. Staff in the Hamilton County school district had a number of complaints about some of its SES providers:

- Providers entice parents to sign their children up sometimes without providing quality services (e.g., one provider gives parents a \$100 gift card to Wal-Mart and provides transportation if their students attend the program every day).
- Providers reap high profits and their fees often match the district's maximum allowable rate.
- Some providers use the district's own teachers and facilities to provide services, even though the district is prevented from acting as its own provider.

Metro district officials note similar problems, particularly when providers promote their own services.

Money is a contentious issue under the NCLB requirements for districts prohibited from providing their own SES. The districts are required to set aside up to 20 percent of their Title I funds to pay for SES and transportation costs related to school choice. Funds that are not spent for this purpose because of low demand for transfer or tutoring options may be spent for other purposes. NCLB critics have pointed out that this creates a situation in which it is monetarily advantageous for districts to set up barriers for providers.¹³² Some district officials contend that they could provide services to more students at a less costly rate, were they allowed to use these set-aside funds themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislative Recommendations

The General Assembly may wish to continue to enhance funding for at-risk and English language learning students.

Administrative and legislative action in 2006 increased the enhanced funding to recognize 38.5 percent of at-risk students and reduced the ratio of ELL students to instructors and translators. The increases, however, still fall short of BEP Review Committee recommendations. Further enhancements would benefit all school systems in the state that have students fitting in either of those categories and not just systems reviewed in this report; however, since school systems on notice tend to have higher populations of these categories, recognizing the higher cost to educate these students through the BEP formula will certainly benefit systems reviewed in this report.

The General Assembly may wish to require an induction and mentoring program for new teachers in Tennessee and provide funds necessary to implement such a program as developed by the Tennessee Department of Education and State Board of Education.

A funded new teacher induction program, which would include a strong mentoring program, could significantly lower teacher attrition and improve the overall quality of teaching in the state. The state Department of Education and the State Board of Education have already taken steps to develop sample induction programs, and many states have strong models that could be replicated in Tennessee.

¹³¹ U.S. Department of Education, "Supplemental Educational Services Non-Regulatory Guidance," June 13, 2005, p. 14.

¹³² Jeffrey H. Cohen, "Supplemental Services: Theory vs. Practice," *Education Week*, May 24, 2006.

The General Assembly may wish to consider increasing the number of times that a licensed teacher must be evaluated.

Evaluating licensed teachers only twice in 10 years does not appear to significantly impact teaching quality or encourage “teachers to move beyond their current level of performance.”¹³³ Though increasing the number of times a teacher is evaluated would place additional burdens on school administrators, more frequent evaluations would allow districts and the state to better identify teaching quality issues and provide better feedback to teachers. In addition, professional development initiatives could be significantly better targeted with more frequent evaluations.

The General Assembly may wish to consider mandating that new teachers be assigned smaller classes and have additional planning time. Although such a requirement would incur some costs, helping new teachers succeed would likely improve the retention rate.

Administrative Recommendations

The Tennessee Department of Education should develop and seek federal and state funding for a statewide, comprehensive induction program for new teachers.

Because of No Child Left Behind’s emphasis on teaching quality, and because of Tennessee’s challenges with teacher recruitment and retention, the state is ready for a strong, funded induction program for new teachers. As stated previously, good induction programs can significantly improve teacher retention. In addition, the Department should consider developing a system for following teachers throughout their careers.

The Tennessee Department of Education should offer additional trainings for administrators in using the Framework. The Department should also clearly articulate to administrators that they are responsible for following up on their teachers’ future growth plans.

Principals are not adequately using the Framework to improve their teaching staff. By offering additional trainings for administrators, the Department of Education could better explain the purpose of the Framework and the ways in which administrators can effectively use it. In addition, the Department needs to clearly articulate to principals that they are responsible for the professional development plans that result from the evaluations. The Department may also wish to reconsider allowing districts to train evaluators.

The Tennessee Department of Education should evaluate the effectiveness of the parent/family involvement plans in engaging more parental and family involvement.

Based on federal and state requirements, Tennessee schools and districts are implementing various activities and programs to increase family involvement in their schools. The Department needs to monitor and evaluate the results of these efforts to determine the impact on the level of family involvement in the schools and the impact on school improvement and student achievement.

The Tennessee Department of Education should ensure that the results of an evaluation of supplemental educational service providers be provided to parents prior to their choosing a provider.

Families are dependent on the state and district to inform them of supplemental tutoring options as required by No Child Left Behind. The state Department of Education should clearly disseminate the results of its evaluation of supplemental service providers so that families can make the best decisions about services for their children.

¹³³ Tennessee Department of Education, “Framework for Professional Development and Growth;” Accessed at <http://state.tn.us/education/frameval/> on August 1, 2006.

The Tennessee Department of Education should develop a comprehensive plan to reduce dropouts and include an audit of district graduation rate data to ensure accuracy.

Tennessee suffers from low graduation rates and all indications suggest that this trend will continue. However, the Department has not developed a systematic, thorough plan for attacking the dropout issue. Though the Department of Education claims that it will begin auditing graduation data in school year 2006-07, no plan is currently available for these audits. In addition, at the time of publication, staff from the internal audit division of the Department of Education were unaware that they would be auditing graduation data starting this fall. Without valid graduation data, districts could be held accountable for low graduation rates that do not accurately reflect the true dropout picture.

The State Board of Education should consider adding a component of teacher observations to the Framework, much like those in the Toledo Plan for Teacher Evaluation.

The Toledo Plan for Teacher Evaluation brings teachers into the dialogue about teaching quality. The plan uses experienced teachers to assist in evaluating novice teachers and to model strong teaching skills. Tennessee's Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth could benefit from a teacher evaluation component, and would likely provide the Framework with more credibility among teachers. In addition, the State Board of Education should look at adding a mentoring induction aspect to the Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth.

APPENDIX A – PERSONS CONTACTED

Fayette County

Sandra Bryant
Principal, Central Elementary

Charles Earle
Principal, Fayette-Ware Comprehensive High School

Louise Holloway
Assistant Superintendent/Personnel Director,
Fayette County Schools

Nabil Loutfi
Technology Coordinator, Fayette County Schools

Donna Signaigo
K-12 Instruction Supervisor, Fayette County Schools

James Teague
Title I Director, Fayette County Schools

Myles Wilson
Superintendent of Schools, Fayette County Schools

Hamilton County

Connie Atkins
Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources,
Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE)

Pat Bowers
Interim Communications, HCDE

Fred Carr
Former Assistant Superintendent of Technology and
Student Services, HCDE

Warren Hill
Director of High Schools, HCDE

Dale Isabell
Chief Financial Officer, HCDE

Robert S. Jenkins
Principal, Soddy Daisy Middle School

Christie Jordan
Director of Accounting and Budgets, HCDE

Kirk Kelly
Director of Accountability and Testing, HCDE

Wade Kelley
Former Principal, Red Bank High School

Julie Legg
Former Assistant Principal, Clifton Hills Elementary
School

Lucille Phillips
Director of Federal Programs, HCDE

Dr. Jesse Register
Former Superintendent, HCDE

Krystal Scarbrough
Principal, Clifton Hills Elementary School

Rick Smith
Deputy Superintendent, HCDE

Dr. Elaine Swaffard
Executive Principal, Howard School of Academics
and Technology

Ray Swoffard
Associate Superintendent of Elementary Education,
HCDE

Sheila Young
Associate Superintendent of Secondary Education,
HCDE

Knox County

Tammy Chaney
School Resource Unit, Knoxville Police Department

Janet Chesney
Teacher, Knox Adaptive Education Center

Ken Dunlap
Former Principal, Northwest Middle School

Brian Hartsell
Principal, Austin-East Magnet High School

Rhonda Kerr
Teacher, Knox Adaptive Education Center

Dr. Charles Q. Lindsey
Superintendent, Knox County Schools (KCS)

Claudia Lineberger
Principal, Knox Adaptive Education Center

Brian Piggush
Teacher, Knox Adaptive Education Center

Krista Rines
Teacher, Knox Adaptive Education Center

Rodney E. Russell
Supervisor of Staff Development, KCS

Dr. Kathy D. Sims
Executive Director of Human Services, KCS

Linda Ward
Administrative Assistant, KCS

Dr. Donna L. Wright
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, KCS

Memphis City

Joyce Anderson
Principal, Klondike Elementary School

Tequilla Banks
Research Evaluator, Memphis City Schools (MCS)

Charlotte Baucom
Prevention/Intervention Supervisor, MCS

Mr. Aubrey Bond
Director of NCLB, MCS

Wayne Booker
Coordinator, Strategic Planning and Quality Improvement, MCS

Marion Brewer
Principal, Oakhaven Middle/High School

Brenda Cassellius
Middle Schools Superintendent, MCS

Linda Delaney
Prevention/Intervention Supervisor, MCS

Ashley Faulk
Prevention/Intervention Specialist, MCS

Benjamin Greene
Former Principal, Trezevant High School

Dr. Alfred Hall
Chief Academic Officer, MCS

Nita Hartley
Coordinator of Compliance and Instruction, MCS

Brady Henderson
Prevention/Intervention Specialist, MCS

Bernadeia Johnson
Former Deputy Superintendent, MCS

Dr. Carol Johnson
Superintendent, MCS

Denise Keys Johnson
Coordinator, Blue Ribbon Plan, MCS

Greg Keith
Teacher Induction Staff Development Coordinator, MCS

Suzanne Kelly
Chief of Staff, MCS

Michael Malone
Assistant Principal, Northside High School

Dr. Vivian G. Morris
Assistant Dean for Faculty Development, University of Memphis

Heather Murley
Administrative Secretary, New Teacher Center, University of Memphis

Ronald V. Pope
Director, Division of Student Engagement, MCS

Ann Sharp
Prevention/Intervention Specialist, MCS

James W. Smith
Chief Technology Officer, MCS

Brenda Taylor
Early Learning Coordinator, MCS

Bill White
Executive Director of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment, MCS

Barbara Williams
Instructional Facilitator, Northside High School

Dr. Freda Williams
Professional Development Director, MCS

John White
Principal, Pyramid Academy

Nashville

Lenna Allen
Director of Professional Development, Metropolitan
Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)

Joe Anderson
Director, Security, MNPS

Dr. Terri Breeden
Executive Director – Grades 5-12, MNPS

Dr. Paul Changas
Director, Assessment and Evaluation, MNPS

Dr. Frank Cirrincione
Former Assistant Principal, McGavock
Comprehensive High School

Pat Cole
Former Director of Guidance Counseling, MNPS

Mary Lou Del Rio
Principal, Paragon Mills Elementary School

Dr. Pedro Garcia
Director of Schools, MNPS

Pam Garrett
MNPS School Board Chair

Dr. Lora Hall
Principal, Glenclyff Comprehensive High School

Dr. Kathleen Harned
Former Assistant Principal, McGavock
Comprehensive High School

Dr. Jamie Jenkins
Former Assistant Principal, McGavock
Comprehensive High School

Howard Jones
Assistant Principal, McGavock Comprehensive High
School

Dr. Sandy Johnson
Chief Instructional Officer, MNPS

Dr. June Keel
Assistant Superintendent – Human Resources,
MNPS

Karl Lang
Principal, Hillwood Comprehensive High School

Diane Long
Public Information Coordinator, MNPS

Lance Lott
Assistant Superintendent – Technology and
Strategic Planning, MNPS

Ruben De Pena
Language Translation Specialist, MNPS

Mary L. Martin
Director of Federal and Categorical Programs and
Grants, MNPS

Wallace McNelley
Principal, Jere Baxter Middle School

Clay Myers
Principal, Hunters Lane Comprehensive High
School

Mary Nollner
Principal, Joelton Middle School

James Overstreet
Director 9-12, MNPS

Kaye Schneider
Director of Magnet/Optional Schools, MNPS

Ralph Tagg
Principal, Neely's Bend Middle School

Ralph M. Thompson
Assistant Superintendent – Student Services, MNPS

Michael Tribue
Principal, McGavock Comprehensive High School

Dr. Sheila Woodruff
Principal, Alex Green Elementary School

Aimee Wyatt
Assistant Principal, McGavock Comprehensive High
School

State of Tennessee

Kaneal Alexander
Director, Teacher Evaluation, Tennessee
Department of Education

Dr. Christy Ballard
General Counsel, Tennessee Department of
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Dr. Keith Brewer
Deputy Commissioner, Tennessee Department of
Education

Angie Cannon
Executive Director, Teacher Quality and
Development, Tennessee Department of Education

Corey Chatis
Director of Data Quality, Tennessee Department of
Education

Cory Curl
Director of Policy and Planning, Tennessee
Department of Education

Sandra R. Gray
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Carol Groppel
Consultant, Tennessee Department of Education

Cleo Harris
Director, BASE-TN, Tennessee Department of
Education

James Herman
Director, Reading First, Tennessee Department of
Education

Mike Herrmann
Executive Director, School Safety and Learning
Support Programs, Tennessee Department
of Education

Dr. Mary Jo Howland
Deputy Executive Director, State Board of Education

Anna Kniazewycz
Statistical Analyst Supervisor, Tennessee
Department of Education

Julie McCargar
Executive Director, Federal Programs, Tennessee
Department of Education

Karen Moody
Director of Teacher Quality and Recruitment,
Tennessee Department of Education

Bruce Opie
Director, Legislation and Policy, Tennessee
Department of Education

Mike Schroeder
Director, Troops for Teachers, Tennessee
Department of Education

Dr. Connie Smith
Executive Director of Accountability, Tennessee
Department of Education

Chris Steppe
Director of Internal Audit, Tennessee Department of
Education

Sharon Walker
Licensing Consultant, Tennessee Department of
Education

Jerry Winters
Manager, Government Relations, Tennessee
Education Association

APPENDIX B— RESPONSE LETTERS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
6th FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

LANA C. SEIVERS, Ed.D.
COMMISSIONER

November 28, 2006

Ms. Ethel Detch, Director of Research and Evaluation
Office of the Comptroller
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0268

Dear Ms. Detch:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the report your office recently compiled on Tennessee's high priority schools. The Department takes very seriously its responsibility for assisting these school systems and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

The appropriate members of my staff will continue to review and evaluate the report in terms of the research methodology applied, report content, and feasibility of the administrative recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lana C. Seivers".

Lana C. Seivers

DR. GARY L. NIXON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

TENNESSEE
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
9TH FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-1050
(615) 741-2966
FAX: (615) 741-0371
www.state.tn.us/sbe

October 17, 2006

Ms. Ethel Detch
Director
Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Education Accountability
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
Nashville, TN 37243-0268

Dear Ms. Detch:

The State Board of Education commends the time and research that has gone into the development of this report by the Office of Education Accountability.

The Board concurs with the need for statewide induction and mentoring programs. Research studies support the need for high quality induction and mentoring programs as a means of retaining teachers new to the classroom. Further high quality mentoring programs also provide new teachers with instructional support that allows them to improve their effectiveness in the classroom. High quality mentoring and induction programs are cost effective and provide a career path for experienced teachers. The initial high cost and human capital investment often deters districts from implementing the most successful practices. The Board supports legislation to provide start up costs to institute high quality state approved induction and mentoring programs statewide.

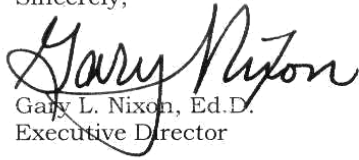
The current *Framework for Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth* was adopted by the Board in 2004 and has not been fully implemented. The Board will review the components of the model this spring, after another round of evaluations. The Board supports the idea of teacher coaching and communities of learners. Currently the Board does not support the idea of teachers evaluating each others work as part of a decision to continue employment.

The Board is exploring opportunities to provide continual professional growth for teachers. The *Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth* is constructed to provide for continuous improvement. Teachers who are actively learning how to improve their practice model for students that learning is a life long endeavor. Using

Ms. Ethel Detch
October 17, 2006
Page 2

the framework to reflect, plan growth, review lesson results and engage in peer coaching activities does not require a rule to implement. Principals can currently increase the number of times teachers are formally evaluated. Increasing the number of formal evaluations may help in some cases. Teachers using the model as a tool for development would find it more helpful to engage with peers and participate in professional growth activities that are timely and relevant to a teachers' needs.

Sincerely,



Gary L. Nixon, Ed.D.
Executive Director

GLN/pc

Offices of Research and Education Accountability Staff

Director

◆ Ethel Detch

Assistant Director (Research)

Douglas Wright

Assistant Director (Education Accountability)

◆ Phil Doss

Principal Legislative Research Analysts

◆ Russell Moore

◆ Kim Potts

Senior Legislative Research Analysts

◆ Katie Cour

◆ Erin Do

◆ Jessica Gibson

◆ Kevin Krushenski

◆ Susan Mattson

Associate Legislative Research Analysts

Nneka Gordon

◆ Eric Harkness

◆ Patrick Hultman

◆ Mike Montgomery

Executive Secretary

◆ Sherrill Murrell

◆ indicates staff who assisted with this project

Note that former OREA staff members Corey Chatis and Jessica Lewis also assisted with this project.