



# Advocating the Board's Vision

2019-20 School Board Academy

In cooperation with The Tennessee Department of Education



# Advocating Your Board's Vision

## *Agenda*

8:00 a.m.	Welcome and Overview
8:10 a.m.	Exercising Board Leadership Through the Visioning Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What Vision Is</li><li>- What Vision Does</li><li>- What Kills Vision</li></ul>
8:30 a.m.	Board's Role in Creating A Vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Core Values and Beliefs</li><li>- Shared Vision</li><li>- Vision Statement</li><li>- Mission Statement</li><li>- Role of Board and Superintendent in the Vision and Planning Process</li></ul>
9:30 a.m.	BREAK
9:45 a.m.	Impact of TNDOE's Strategic Plan on School Board's Plan
10:00 a.m.	Paths to Promise <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SBOE High School Policy</li><li>- State Laws Impacting Graduation Requirements</li><li>- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act</li><li>- Overview of the TSBA District Data Dashboard</li></ul>
11:30 a.m.	LUNCH
12:30 p.m.	Ensuring Vision Becomes A Reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Board Strategic Planning and Goal Setting</li><li>- Managing Data For Strategic Planning</li><li>- Review of System Report Cards</li></ul>
1:45 p.m.	BREAK
2:00 p.m.	Advocating the Board's Vision and Strategic Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Developing County Commission/City Council Support</li><li>- Influencing State Legislators and Congressmen</li><li>- Working with the Media</li><li>- Generating Public Support</li><li>- Turning Employees into Advocates</li></ul>
3:45 p.m.	Wrap-Up and Evaluation
4:00 p.m.	ADJOURN



## Chapter 1

*Exercising Board Leadership  
Through Visioning Process*



## EXERCISING BOARD LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE VISIONING PROCESS

### School Board Members As Leaders

School boards are charged with the responsibility of educating all children to their full potential. In a time of rapid social, economic, and technological change, the board's responsibility is greater than ever. School board members, both individually and collectively, must be leaders in their school system and in their community.

A board exercises leadership within the school system when its members can combine their talents to:

- Create-on behalf of and with extensive participation by the entire community-a vision of the district's education future;
- Set common goals congruent with that vision and prioritize them;
- Establish a structure to achieve its vision;
- Developing educational standards designed to meet the needs of all students and an assessment program designed to determine district and student progress;
- Enact fair, workable, and carefully considered policies;
- Hold the board and all staff members accountable by monitoring student achievement, evaluating board and district programs in light of student achievement goals, providing appropriate training opportunities, and keeping the public informed about the status of education programs and progress;

- Align personnel and financial resources with the district's vision and standards;
- Ensure a safe and orderly climate in which students can learn and teachers can teach;
- Serve as advocates for children and for the public schools through collaborative relationships designed to bring people together; and
- Question, revise, refine and revisit in order to ensure continuous improvement.

(Source: *Becoming A Better Board Member*, NSBA, Third Edition, 2006)

## Vision: The Board's Work

The board's work is about vision, the mental picture of what the schools and district would be if everything were perfect. It's a mental image of success. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision. They have strong, shared beliefs and values about what's possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels. Effective boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use the insights to drive continuous improvement. Effective boards also align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.

To ensure that the board's vision becomes reality, the board should develop a strategic plan and establish policies for implementation. The board's community leadership function involves building the public support necessary to implement the vision. Boards exercise leadership by holding themselves and staff accountable for monitoring student achievement, evaluating board and district programs in light of student achievement goals, providing appropriate training opportunities, and keeping the public informed about the status of education programs and student progress. Boards need to lead as a united team with their superintendent to ensure the vision is implemented.

Why do boards need a vision? A clear and compelling vision is necessary for districts to achieve excellence. Districts that can see beyond the present and create a vision for the future reach heights that surpass the expected or even imagined. Management guru Peter Drucker wrote:

*Every few hundred years in Western history  
there occurs a sharp transformation.*

*We cross ... a divide. Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself- its world-view; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And the people born then cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born.*

We are living through one of these periods of transformation. As boards create vision statements, they need to ask, "Are we educating our students with educational constructs that were created for their parents and grandparents? Do students feel disconnected from the current approaches to learning?"

## What is Vision?

Vision is not about what we are, but what we want to be. It captures a critical dimension of dynamic systems. For school boards, it is about where you are going and what kind of district you are trying to create. A positive vision is future-focused and seeks to shape events rather than simply let them happen.

Vision is the ability to see and create the future education system you desire. While current realities you face are important, vision means having a clear image of what "better" looks like and taking the necessary governance steps to get there.

Positive and inspiring visions require the widespread involvement of those whose lives will be influenced and shaped by vision. Powerful visions are the product of endless hours of discussion and dialogue among key stakeholders. Without involvement, there is unlikely to be much commitment on the part of those upon whom we must rely to achieve it.

Your vision is not the same as your mission statement. The mission statement is a simple explanation of purpose -- the reason a school district exists. A mission statement clearly explains the needs the district fulfills, whom these needs are fulfilled for, and how these needs will be met.

What does having a vision do for the board? It helps you think beyond your boundaries; provides continuity for your planning; identifies direction and purpose; alerts stakeholders to needed changes; promotes interest, commitment, and laser-like focus; encourages and builds confidence; builds loyalty through involvement; and results in efficiency and productivity.

What can kill a board's vision? Commonly it is tightly held tradition, fear of ridicule, complacency among some stakeholders, short-term thinking, and naysayers.

## Chapter 2

*Board's Role in Creating a Vision*



## BOARD'S ROLE IN CREATING A VISION

### Establish Guidance System

The development of a guidance system involves three basic components: basic beliefs, a mission statement, and planning categories.

### Compile a list of basic beliefs

Does it make a difference what the members of the board of education believe about learning, schools, and education in general? Thomas Watson Jr., chairman of IBM says: "Any organization, in order to survive and achieve success, must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions... The most important single factor in corporate success is faithful adherence to those beliefs."

The board, superintendent, and other persons who the board may choose to involve should compile a list of basic beliefs regarding education. A form for compiling basic beliefs is on page 20. Three sample basic beliefs for one school system follow:

### Sample Beliefs

- Public education is a responsibility shared by schools, the families and members of the community.
- The ability to think creatively is necessary in a changing society.
- Learning is a life-long process.

A list of basic beliefs of the board of education will be useful in writing the mission statement. It will also help the board to maintain consistency throughout the plan. It is preferable to include only those beliefs upon which there is a consensus.

*Any organization, in order to survive and achieve success, must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions.*

## Do you believe...

...there is a positive correlation between learning and school attendance?

...students are more likely to achieve if their parents are involved and supporting the schools?

...decisions should be made as close to the point of implementation as possible?

...students should be challenged by educators who have high expectations and provide quality instruction?

...each student deserves a good teacher ever hour of every day?

...schools belong to the community and the community's opinion's and partnerships are essential to effectively meet the needs of the community?

...students who drop out of school before high school graduation are likely to become a burden on society?

...schools should be inviting places for children?

...every child should have a successful experience every school day?

...knowing how to find information and problem solve is more important than memorization?

...when students fail, the school fails?

...schools have responsibility to help students develop in other areas as well as academics?

In the space below, list your basic beliefs about education. Share your basic beliefs with other members of your board. If all participants agree on the belief, write it inside the box. If anyone disagrees, write it outside the box.

## Consensus Beliefs

## For Further Discussion

## The Value of a Shared Vision and Core Values

Developing a shared vision that reflects your school community's core values and beliefs is the starting point for a school board and its focus on student achievement. This shared vision is the key to the mission and goals that direct board and staff actions and gains the entire community's commitment to improving achievement for all students. Engaging the entire community in creating the vision generates support for getting the resources- both financial and human capital- necessary to make it a reality.

Building a shared vision requires you to agree on your core values and beliefs. Core values drive the vision. They underlie the work to be done, define how individuals interact with each other, and help determine the strategies necessary to fulfill the mission. Core values are the belief systems that motivate a person or group to choose one alternative over another. They are guiding principles that remain constant even when the mission and vision may change.

Knowing what you really value, individually and collectively, guides your aspirations and your mission as a district. It also guides your behavior. In visionary school districts, core values don't need external justification because they don't sway with trends or fads. These five to six guiding tenants are the foundation for the way the district acts, how it treats people, and what it will do to achieve the vision and mission.

Your vision should inspire, look ahead, and lead. Defining your vision is taking charge of your destiny. For districts, that destiny must be improving achievement for all students. A vision with anything less than student achievement as the top priority cannot fulfill public education's core mission.

## Creating A Vision

Vision becomes reality through the daily actions of everyone in the organization. In a school district, "everyone" includes employees, parents, community advocates, businesses, government agencies, and higher education institutions. Engaging the community makes the vision more likely to be accepted and encourages the behaviors necessary to achieve the vision. As a board of education, it is your responsibility to work with the community to develop student achievement as the top priority.

Achieving such total commitment requires multiple steps. First, gather input to identify the community's core beliefs and common values. Once those are defined, develop a process for drafting a vision statement. After the draft statement is written, test it by seeking feedback to ensure it reflects the community's core beliefs and inspires a commitment to improving student achievement. When the vision statement is complete, the dissemination process begins.

Communicating the vision to the entire community is essential. As board members, you must articulate the vision's main points at every opportunity, both when you are together and when you are in the community. By constantly repeating, reinforcing, and embracing these main components, you will develop the constancy of purpose necessary to sustain the vision.

This work takes persistence. Knowing that your board is committed to investing the time necessary to achieve the vision will motivate staff to be committed to working as hard and as long as necessary to be successful. Your constancy of purpose and commitment to your district's long-term change gives staff the encouragement to try new ideas that may need time to become successful. Long-term results require long-range thinking and commitment.

*Here are several key questions to ask as you work toward a shared vision for your district:*

1. Do you use data to tailor solutions based on the needs and assets of each school and its community?
2. Is your accountability system based on best practice and sound research?
3. Do you embrace vigorous standards?
4. Do you recognize that sustained or pervasive underperformance cannot be tolerated?
5. Do you see that advocacy is the only way to shift state and federal policy matters from mandatory prescriptive programs to providing assistance and resources to spur innovation?
6. Are you a catalyst for innovation with a customer service approach to the education of every student?
7. Do you realize year-round or other non-traditional school calendars and extended days and years will be common in the school district of the future?
8. Do you see the need to expand innovation to business operations and infrastructure (e.g. outsourcing, facility sharing, job sharing)?
9. Do you respect the fact that parents and students have choices?
10. Do you see the need to provide a portfolio of public school options in your jurisdiction to help parents and students determine their best option?
11. What is the ideal school year?
12. What is the ideal school day?
13. Do you think the curriculum that your students need most can be taught effectively within a traditional classroom setting?
14. How much freedom should students be given in deciding when, where, and how they connect to learning?
15. How do we ensure that all children have access to the full range of connective technologies and are taught the skills necessary to use them effectively?
16. Do you educate your students with educational constructs that were created to serve the agricultural and industrial ages?

The answers to these and similar questions can help board members reflect on actions needed now to achieve the envisioned future. A well-developed and clearly articulated vision for your school system can help you see a bit farther into the distance.

Defining your vision means taking charge of your destiny. For school districts, that destiny must be improving student achievement for each and every student. Anything less can't fulfill the core mission of public education. After all, our obligation to our students is to prepare them for the world they will inherit.

Policy makers often express impatience with discussions which focus on vision. Developing a vision seems fuzzy and passive. Most school boards simply have little experience in or patience for designing a "vision."

"If we cannot imagine it, it will never happen..." Vision drives practice. Write at least three words or phrases which identify a part of your vision for your schools.

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

## Defining the Vision

There are as many different visions and ways to develop a vision as there are educational systems. Developing a vision does not mean starting from scratch, and it does not mean standing still. A vision-setting process should be designed to meet the needs of the community it is designed to serve.

A vision should focus on desired outcomes. It should be inspirational and compelling. A vision should make people think about how the world can be different if they are willing to change the way education systems operate. At its core, a vision is an expression of community values. It should reflect those values and beliefs that bind a community together and define its shared responsibility to students.

Establishing a vision begins as a conversation about the future among the members of the board or community. In its simplest terms, a vision describes the ideal education system. What does it look like? What does it value? What kinds of learners does it produce? What can students in this system do? What knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes do they have? How does the system function to produce these kinds of learners? Who is involved and what are their roles?

Conversations about such issues build ownership. Even if a part of the vision is established initially at the state level, local groups should be encouraged to discuss, adapt and tailor the vision to make it their own. Shared ownership is critical because, in the final analysis, the keepers of the vision are not the leaders who oversee the process of articulating the vision, but the people who are called upon to carry it out.

A vision is an absolute precondition to creating an education system that will effectively educate students for the future. Directing a school system without a vision is like navigating a ship without a destination. Even the best navigators managing a highly dedicated crew will drift aimlessly without a guiding beacon. Vision provides a beacon, building awareness of future opportunities and challenges and defining ways to navigate the changing demands of the marketplace. Vision identifies "what" the desired future should be and sets a platform for strategic planning, which maps "how" to get there. The most accurate way to predict the future is to create it.

## Visioning vs. Strategic Planning

We can define visioning as identifying the “whats” and strategic planning as articulating the “hows.” Visioning is a prelude that creates the platform for strategic planning. Visioning involves defining the future environment through analyses of forces and significant issues, and carrying out a picture of what the desired future should look like. Strategic planning involves identifying specific actions, activities, and ways of influencing the environment to bring about the desired future.

## Start with an Envisioned Future

By looking into the future, we can define an optimum existence, and work this back in time to determine what must happen today to bring about that existence. By looking first into the future, and linking with today, we tend to achieve a more “objective” vision. Not objective in the sense of disinterested or dispassionate, but objective in the sense of non-biased.

## Crafting a Shared Vision

The measurement of a vision’s success is its ability to mobilize the consent of the members of your organization. People have to want to buy into your vision. If you can’t articulate your vision, if you can’t get people to buy in, forget it. You won’t be successful.

## The Group Process

With direct grassroots input from all stakeholders a vision process incorporates a wide spectrum of viewpoints and expertise. The opportunities and challenges facing all segments of the organization are addressed in order to draw the group together to create a vibrant and viable future. A group process for creating a vision of the future allows individual ideas to be combined and refined, and stimulates creativity through the exchange of viewpoints. A group process enhances the level of commitment, fosters a sense of mutual respect, and builds trust in the future direction of the organization.

A group process works to clarify understanding, encourage creativity, and develop future thinking. The greater the level of participation in the vision process, the greater the effectiveness of the process and the value of the outcome.

## Sample Vision Statements

- One team that provides a superior education for every student.
- Excellence for every child.
- Every student, every day.
- A district recognized nationally for students who excel in academics, the arts and, athletics.

	Vision	Mission
Answers	What?	Why?
Definition	Snapshot	Statement
Purpose	Inspires	Informs
Activity	Seeing	Doing
Source	Heart	Head
Effect	Challenges	Clarifies

Source: Glennsmithcoaching.com

## A Vision Statement

- Defines the optimal desired future state - the mental picture of what an organization wants to achieve over time.
- Provides guidance and inspiration as to what an organization is focused on achieving in five, ten or more years.
- Functions as the “north star”. It is what all employees understand their work everyday contributes towards accomplishing over the long term.
- Is written succinctly in an inspirational manner that makes it easy for all employees to repeat it at any given time.

## MY VISION

Identify words, phrases, sentences, or illustrations consistent with your mental picture of what success looks like with regard to each of the following:

### Schools

### Students

### Teachers

### Learning

# Vision

# Mission

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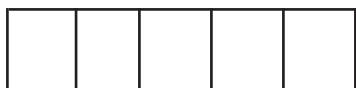
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Objectives



Strategies

Relationship of Vision, Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

## Vision Self-Assessment

Use this tool to assess your initial understanding of vision and to get a sense of where you are as a board on this essential work. Indicate the degree to which your board/district/staff has achieved the following elements toward establishing a vision to improve student achievement.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve	Don't Know/Unsure
Stakeholder representatives (school board, senior leadership, district staff, school staff, employee organizations, parents, community advocates, higher education, business leaders, and students) helped create the vision.					
As a board we have discussed the core values of our school district, employee groups, and community, and these values are reflected in our vision.					
Our board has established a written vision that commits to student achievement as the top priority of the school board, staff, and community.					
Our vision is clearly articulated and known to all community members who have a vested interest.					
We frequently revisit and reaffirm our vision to ensure our constancy of purpose.					
Our vision is the foundation for all long-range, strategic planning, and policy decisions.					
Our vision is the guiding force that sets the framework for how we operate as a local district.					
We base our resource and budget decisions on our vision. Everything we do as a board of education works to achieve our vision.					

To ensure the board's vision becomes a reality, the board must create a mission statement and develop goals to achieve it.

## Develop a mission statement

A mission statement describes the ultimate purpose and scope of the school district. The mission statement is the focal point of all goals, objectives, and actions taken by the board, administration, teaching, and support staffs. It should be concise and understood by every employee of the school system.

Mission statements vary tremendously in style, length, and format. Some seem to ramble endlessly, trying to comprehensively capture every possible facet of the organization. Others fit nicely in a single sentence, forcing the essence of the organization's mission into a statement that fits on the back of a business card and is easily memorized. Regardless of the style, length, or format, the vital nature of the statement is that it reflects the true mission of the organization with integrity, clarity, and inspiration.

## Sample Mission Statements

Check the boxes which apply to each statement

Concise	Memorable	Clear	Mission Statements
			To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful (Google)
			To help people and businesses throughout the world realize their full potential (Microsoft)
			To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time (Starbucks)
			To refresh the world...to inspire moments of optimism and happiness...to create value and make a difference (Coca-Cola)

Now consider the following mission statements from school districts. Are they likely to be understood and remembered by employees? Will the system be guided by these statements? Rewrite each mission statement to make it more concise and memorable.

**Baltimore, MD, Schools  
Mission Statement**

Rooted in the school system's beliefs, the City Schools mission statement expresses the purpose, goals, and functions of City Schools. The mission serves as the cornerstone of the long-term strategic plan and as a means for keeping the school system focused on a common purpose. The mission of City Schools, in concert with students, families, and the broader community, is to prepare all students to be responsible citizens and afford them the opportunity to acquire the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to make informed decisions that lead to meaningful and productive lives.

**Bessemer City Schools  
Mission Statement**

The mission of Bessemer Schools is to produce informed, responsible, productive citizens who will be lifelong learners and successful contributors of society. We will accomplish this mission in cooperation with parents and the community, by providing a dedicated staff, a diverse and challenging curriculum, within a clean, safe and caring environment.

To fulfill its purpose, a mission statement must be a memorable statement that captures the unique purpose (what) for which a district exists and its function (how). It should be no more than one to two lines long. The mission statement should be posted in every district building. Every employee should be able to know it by heart and believe it!

Now, consider the following mission statements of local school districts. Rank the statements according to which you think is best in terms of being concise, memorable, clear and inspirational. (1 being the most concise, and 4 the least).

- \_\_\_\_\_ To provide all students with the skills they need to be confident in academics, sophisticated in learning, and global in orientation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To provide instruction by a diverse group of effective teachers that capitalizes on students' natural attraction to interactivity and learning by doing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To provide for all students exemplary programming that instills wonder, values discovery, and encourages problem solving.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To empower all students to communicate, collaborate, and learn globally

## CRITERIA FOR A MISSION STATEMENT

Consider the following criteria as you develop a mission statement for your schools:

1. Does the statement capture the essential nature of the organization's reason for being?
2. Is the statement client-oriented as opposed to being inwardly or organizationally bound?
3. Does the statement represent a relatively stable anchor point for the organization, one that will not require frequent change?
4. Does the statement describe the desired result rather than focusing on activities?
5. Does the statement reflect the organization's traditions, values, or philosophy relevant to today and the future?

## Mission Statement Worksheet

*Jot down ideas you want to include in the mission statement.*

*Write the mission statement below as developed by your board.*

# Roles and Responsibilities of the School Board and Superintendent in Vision and Planning

## The School Board

- Approves a strategic planning process to include the community in creating the vision for student achievement.
- Adopts the vision.
- Adopts board goals that support the vision.
- Communicates the vision.
- Keeps vision at the forefront of all decision making.
- Adopts policies needed to achieve the vision.
- Allocates resources based on the vision.
- Monitors progress toward vision.

## The Superintendent

- Recommends a visionary strategic planning process to the board that incorporates participation by a broad swath of the community.
- Ensures the integrity of the planning process.
- Ensures staff development to carry out the planning process.
- Ensures the recommendations of the strategic planning team are presented to the board for action.
- Coordinates periodic review of the strategic plan.
- Ensures short and long-range vision plans are developed and carried out at both the district and school levels.
- Develops performance indicators, based on data, to measure progress toward the board's vision for student achievement.

- Conducts work sessions with the board to increase its understanding of progress needed.
- Recommends performance indicators for board action.
- Works with the board to identify its role in supporting the vision.
- Works with the board to develop plans for carrying out its goals.
- Communicates, through the district's communication plan, the vision to staff and community.
- Prepares and disseminates information about progress toward the vision.
- Uses the vision to guide priority recommendations to the board.
- Uses the vision to guide decisions throughout the organization.
- Recommends policies needed to support the vision.
- Conducts periodic review with the board to identify additional policies or revise existing ones.
- Recommends resources needed to support the vision through the budgeting process.
- Conducts periodic review with the board to identify resources and funding needed.
- Brings data to the board periodically that enables the board to review student achievement progress.
- Recommends changes based on data.

## Possible Agenda Items Relating to Vision

- A) Dialogue and work session with staff and community representatives to create vision and mission statements
- B) Formal adoption of vision and mission statements and establishment of yearly goals
- C) Discussion and action on the superintendent's recommended strategic plan for the district
- D) Strategic Plan Review
  - ✓ Are we meeting our timetable?
  - ✓ Plans for assessing successes and shortcomings
  - ✓ Yearly update of district goals
- E) Community open forum on the district's vision, mission, and goals
- F) Reports from community advisory committees
- G) District's communications plan and public relations activities
- H) Recognition events for students and staff who exemplify the district's vision
- I) Superintendent's report on school improvement plans

(Source: *The Key Work of School Boards*, NSBA, 2009)

## Chapter 3

*Ensuring Vision Becomes A Reality*



## ENSURING VISION BECOMES A REALITY

### Involve the Community

The most important step in developing a successful plan for a school district is to gain information from the general public. The community needs to know that the board is interested in the public's ideas. Such a perception will greatly increase the public support for public schools. Therefore, the board must devise a way to gather impressions, observations, or statements about the schools from members of the community. An excellent way to invite people to help shape the plan is for the board to have meetings for public input.

### Hold a Series of Meetings to Accept Oral and Written Comments from Individuals and Organizations

The PTA, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary club, Junior League, League of Women Voters, etc., already have organized meetings and would welcome a program on this topic. The board should also hold at least one public forum for people who do not participate in other organizational meetings to discuss the future of the schools.

In the meetings, ask people to tell you what they see as your school district's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Ask them to be specific.

Three rules should be observed during these community sessions:

1. The person conducting the meetings is not there to answer questions but to gather suggestions and reactions from the public. Therefore, persons conducting the meeting should not defend the school system, but simply hear suggestions and complaints and thank people for them.

2. Each participant's complaint should be accompanied by a suggestion for improvement.
3. Do not promise that what is suggested will be done. Promise that the board will consider all suggestions.

Following the meetings, suggestions should be divided according to planning category. After the suggestions are divided according to planning categories, they will eventually be provided to the board and given to the committee working on objectives and strategies for the goal under this category.

At least three questions should be answered by participants during a community input meeting.

1. What is the school district doing well?
2. What suggestions do you have for helping the school district improve
3. What should the school district be doing five years from now?

Ideas for providing public participation in the planning process other than public meetings include:

- Conducting a comprehensive needs assessment type of community survey prior to developing goals and objectives.
- Having goal statements developed internally, then seeking community reaction.
- Establishing a citizen's advisory committee on long-range planning.

- Publicizing the main elements of the plan through the school district newsletter and/or community newspaper with an invitation for written response from individuals and organizations.

Regardless of the method(s) of soliciting input, the objective should be to find out what the community expects of its schools and to give the public a sense of ownership in the long-range plan. The public relations value of soliciting input will benefit the planning process.

# Analyze Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

In education, the critical-analysis stage of the planning process is usually called needs assessment or self-study. This involves the collection and analysis of data about the school district. Using this information as a base, plans involving the identification, employment, evaluation and analysis of the school district's capabilities are developed. This will require a review and analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems in order to build on strengths, eliminate weaknesses, benefit from opportunities, and avoid threats.

## Defining the Critical Analysis

Critical analysis is the process of collecting, organizing, assessing, and synthesizing past, present, and future information to provide a foundation or base for preparing, implementing and evaluating plans. It is one of the most time-consuming elements of the planning process, particularly when long-range plans are being developed for the first time. The critical analysis serves the following functions:

1. To present a comprehensive picture of the school district's history and current condition.
2. To provide information to the board in such a way that it can determine which factors and variables are affecting progress and to what extent.
3. To provide a basis for other elements of the planning process, such as objectives and strategies.
4. To provide the board with significant information on past, current and possible future conditions.
5. To identify strategic issues relevant to the fulfillment of the school district's mission.

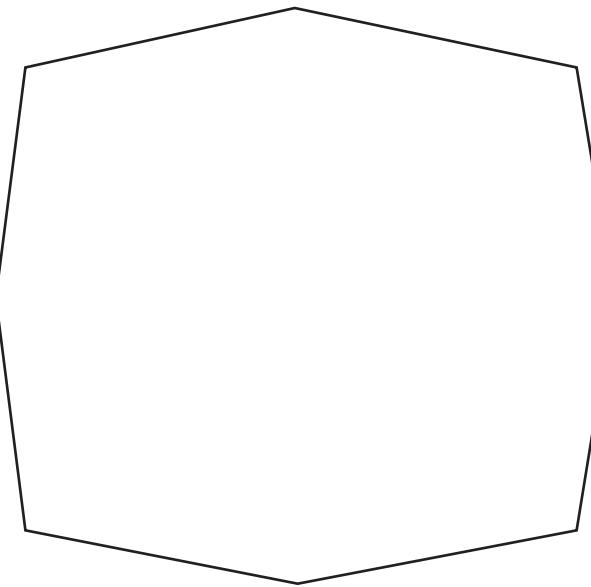
Determining the extent to which a school district is fulfilling its mission and reaching its educational goals will require an assessment of those facets of the external environment that may affect the school organization and an analysis of the internal environment, which includes an appraisal of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The proper analysis and application of this information will be the foundation on which long-range goals and short-range objectives are set.

The critical analysis process will involve the selection and organization of pertinent information taken from a vast amount of available data.

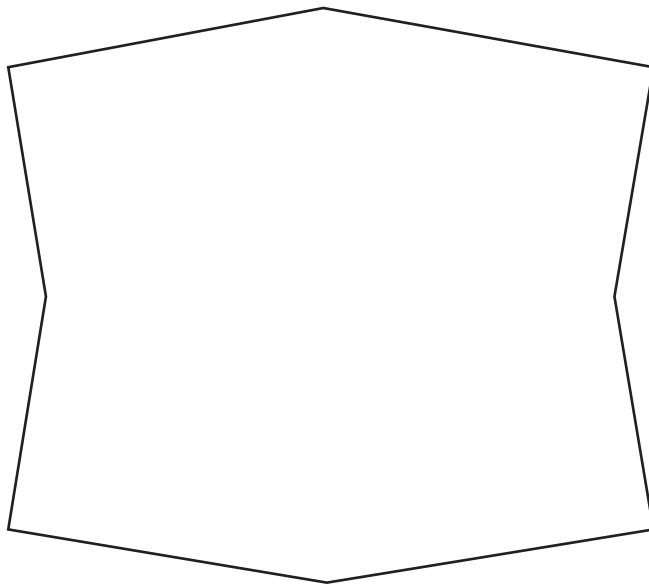
# Classifying Issues

Classify each issue as to whether it should be resolved through planning, policy, promotion, or superintendent evaluation.

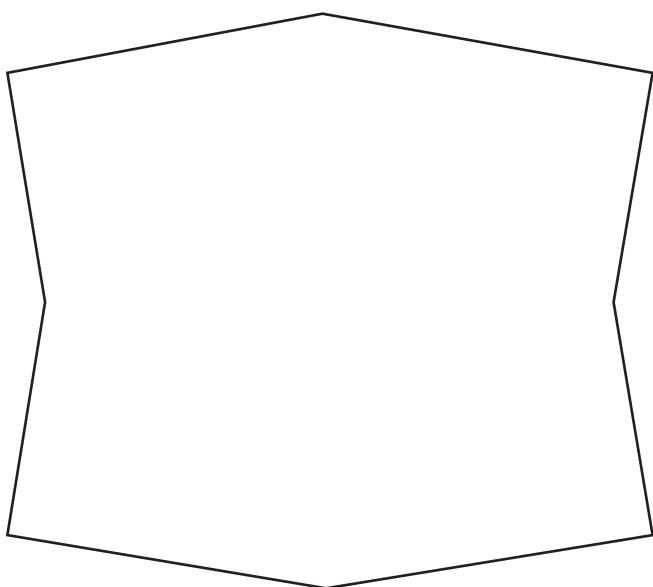
**Issues to be resolved  
through planning:**



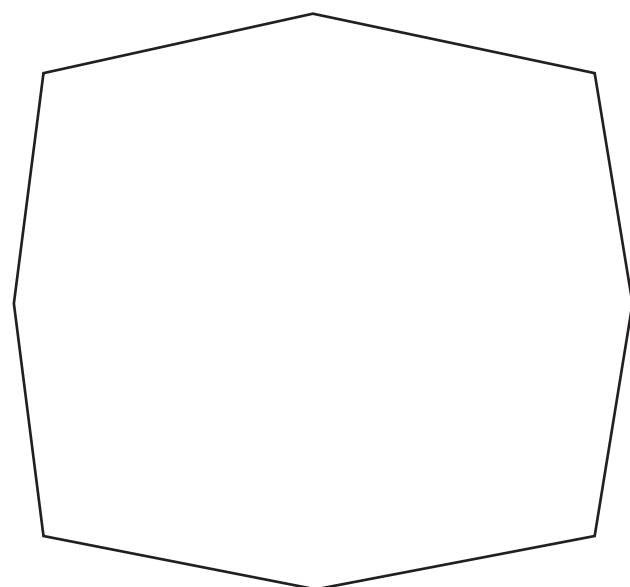
**Issues to be resolved  
through policy:**



**Issues to be resolved  
through promotion:**



**Issues to be resolved through  
superintendent evaluation:**



## Setting Goals

The all-important task of developing goal statements for the school district is a responsibility of the board of education. At this stage in the plan, the board of education will have received suggestions from the community and staff regarding the goals which should be included in the plan. Goals should be considered for each of the planning categories identified earlier.

As the board develops goal statements, it is important to adhere to the following definition of a goal:

**Goal - A One Sentence Statement of the Board, Incorporating Non-Measurable Efforts That Must Be Taken if the Mission is to be Achieved**

A goal is general and timeless and not considered within a specified time; although goals may be added or eliminated, once written they undergo very little change. The board probably will want to include in the long-range plan a goal under each of the planning categories. The board may not want to include a goal under every planning category in its annual operational plan. One of the advantages of this simplified approach to long-range planning is that even though some parts of the plan are not implemented in the annual operational plan in a given year, they still remain part of the overall long-range plan.

### Involve all board members in formulating goals for the board

All board members should be involved in formulating goals for the board. The board should select a process for goal setting that will facilitate the active involvement of each individual member. The process should promote consensus among members regarding board goals.

The board should set aside an adequate amount of time to permit the effective functioning of the goal-setting process. Simply adopting a set of goals for its operation will not enhance board effectiveness. Each board member must "own" the goals if they are to impact board operations.

## Schedule a special meeting with adequate time for the board to set goals

A set of goals developed by the board chairman, the superintendent or any other one individual will probably not affect board operations. The process of goal setting is as important as the products that it generates. To be viable, school board goals must impact the board agenda over time, as well as the behaviors of individual board members. They must also become obsolete at some point because they have in fact been attained.

The following are examples of school board goals:

1. To provide rigorous curriculum aligned with performance standards.
2. To provide safe, clean, secure and well-maintained facilities.
3. To provide world-class professional development for all educators.

## Select planning categories or key result areas

Planning categories or key result areas are used to organize school district goals and objectives and to divide the plan into manageable parts. Each planning category might have several goals and each goal might have a number of actual or potential objectives. Generally, at least the following planning categories should be considered:

### Planning Categories

- A. Student learning and growth
- B. School board operation
- C. School district administration
- D. Instructional programs and services
- E. Support services
- F. Financial resources
- G. Personnel
- H. Physical resources
- I. Community involvement

Strategic goals should be set for each of the nine major planning categories. Each category or key result area is an independent variable that affects the school organization in either a positive or negative manner. However, these categories should be viewed in a systematic manner as a part of the planning process and with the realization that the breakdown of any one key variable can seriously affect the total school organization.

## Use the following goal development process:

1. Set up a flip chart or use a computer and projector to record goals as suggested by participants.
2. Be certain that each school board member has the opportunity to propose a goal. The proposed goals might come from a variety of sources.
3. Write down every goal suggested without discussion of the merits of the suggestion (brainstorming).
4. When all potential goals have been listed, prioritize the goals. Drop those of lowest priority.
5. Each goal adopted by the board should be assigned to a goal development team, consisting primarily of staff, for the development of objectives and strategies to accomplish the goal. The goal development team, with cooperation from the school business official, will project the cost of accomplishing each strategy or objective. The use of a goal development worksheet will be helpful.

## Goal Development Worksheet

Write each goal adopted by the board of education on a separate goal development worksheet. Identify the planning category and designate a person responsible for coordinating the further development and accomplishment of each goal.

This person will be responsible for working with a goal development team to identify objectives and strategies for the implementation of the goal. When the committee has developed objectives and strategies, the coordinator will resubmit a goal development worksheet for each objective under the goal. More than one objective with accompanying strategies may be needed for a goal.

## Developing Goals

### Summary of Key Points:

1. The task of developing goals for the school district is a responsibility of the board of education.
2. A long-range goal is a written assignment for an individual or group to achieve over a period of three or more years.
3. Long-range goals should be established for each of the nine major planning categories.
4. The goal-setting process should promote consensus among board members regarding board goals. Each board member must "own" the goals if they are to impact board operations.

# Develop Objectives and Strategies

Developing objectives and strategies to carry out each goal is the responsibility of the superintendent and the staff. Usually the superintendent designates a staff member for each goal to coordinate staff efforts in the development of objectives and strategies to achieve the goal. Ideas which have been solicited from the community should be considered by the appropriate committee or group of staff members which is developing objectives and strategies.

The superintendent and staff also assume responsibility for arriving at a cost estimate for key proposals and determining which objectives and strategies to recommend to the board for inclusion in the annual operating plan.

## Objectives

An objective is a one-sentence description of a specific activity to accomplish a goal. Each objective includes three parts:

1. A description of a specific activity;
2. A measure of how we'll know when it's achieved; and
3. A time line for completing the activity.

Consider the following examples of objectives:

1. By July 1,\_\_\_\_, to have 100 percent of our students achieving at least one grade level gain per academic year.
2. By July 1,\_\_\_\_, to have 100 percent of the current ninth-grade class graduate from high school.
3. By September 1,\_\_\_\_, to have wireless capabilities in all schools.
4. By July 1, \_\_\_\_, to have 50% student participation in Advanced Placement and/or Dual Credit.

## Strategies

Each objective will have at least one, but usually, several strategies to describe how the objective will be accomplished. A strategy is a one-sentence description of a specific action that will be undertaken to achieve the objective.

## Adopt the Plan

Adoption of the strategic plan is a responsibility of the board. Many other persons have already done considerable work on the plan by this time. The board has tentatively set goals and the superintendent and staff have developed objectives and strategies for each. Additionally, a cost estimate has been developed for each key proposal. Now, the superintendent and board must determine priorities.

As proposed objectives are considered, each must be evaluated in two ways. First, how important is the objective and how will it advance the particular educational goal? And secondly, are there cost implications and, if so, is it affordable?

### Subject each objective to a cost/benefit analysis

Frequently, the public is left with the impression that educators offer educational improvements only through the expenditure of additional funds. This, of course, is not the case. Some objectives do require additional funding. Some may be implemented with existing resources, and still others are designed specifically to reduce costs or to otherwise improve efficiency. There are obvious advantages to including some objectives of each type. In fact, the existence of limited resources actually increases the importance of long-range planning.

### Coordinate planning with the budget

The necessity of coordinating objectives with the budget process is obvious. Certainly, any objective requiring additional staff, equipment, or supplies must be considered in view of the budget. The nature of long-range planning, however, makes it difficult to anticipate its full financial impact. Planning is further complicated for boards in Tennessee since they are fiscally dependent upon a funding body.

### Set Priorities

Obviously, it is not possible to include all potential goals in the long-range strategic plan. Nor is it possible to address all goals which are in the long-range plan in the annual operational plan in a given year. If, after consideration of each key issue in terms of importance and cost, the board needs to further reduce the number of goals.

## Select the strategies for inclusion in the plan

The board should carefully consider each strategy listed under each objective. Some proposed strategies may be prohibitively expensive and some may be inconsistent with the philosophy of the board. Such strategies should be discussed with the goal development team and eliminated if agreement on the strategies is not reached. The board should not allow an objective or a single strategy to be included in the plan unless it can be strongly supported by the board.

## Adopt the Plan

Assemble all the elements of the plan including:

- Beliefs;
- Mission;
- Goals;
- Short-term and long-range objective (optional); and
- Short-term objectives and strategies arranged under the appropriate goal.

If the board can support all elements of the plan, adopt it.

## Promote the Plan

According to researchers who focus on effective schools, the specific content of educational goals is not all that important; what's important is that goals exist and that constituents share these goals. The astute board will ensure the widespread communication of the district's goals to ALL significant publics.

## Evaluate the Plan

A common criticism of many long-range strategic plans is that once adopted, they are filed and forgotten.

### Require that a progress report be made to the board at specified intervals

The policy authorizing the development of a long-range strategic plan should stipulate that a progress report be made to the board of education at specified intervals. It may also require periodic reporting to the general public, perhaps as a part of the district's annual report.

### Communicate failed, incomplete or postponed objectives and those viewed as successes

It would be difficult to establish a successful school district long-range strategic plan without stipulating the method of making appropriate progress reports to the board of education and to school district residents.

### Evaluate

A plan is described as a course of action for getting things done. In this book evaluation is considered in two ways.

#### *Evaluate how well each objective is being attained*

The first type of evaluation is the critical matter of determining how well individual objectives have been—or are being—attained. At the time an objective is adopted, it should be clear who will do the evaluating and what the evaluation criteria will be. Objectives should be stated in measurable terms. Therefore, it will be relatively easy to determine at the time specified in the objective whether or not the objective has been met. However, it is unrealistic to expect that all goals and objectives can be evaluated in absolute terms. The board should be prepared to accept an appraisal system that combines both subjective and objective measures.

#### *Evaluate the plan and planning process*

Additionaly, the long-range strategic plan itself must be evaluated. Those directly involved in the planning and implementing stages are in the best position to react to the planning cycle, the process of soliciting input and selection of annual objectives. Evaluation of the plan is a continuing and evolutionary process and changes must be made as necessary.

## Conclusion

The long-range plan is not an end in itself, but should be seen as the “first cut” in a continuing planning process. Regular planning mechanisms such as annual reports, monthly reporting requirements, or evaluations will continue to offer opportunities and insights, but they are no substitute for a continuing formal planning process that has a long-range perspective. School boards that rest on tradition, good will, and long-standing public support without reassessing their programs, will forfeit their ability to grow and change.

The experience a board, superintendent, and staff gain through their planning experience should be a springboard to an improved planning process. Numerous planning techniques are in existence and others are being developed each year. Your board should tailor the planning process to suit your school district so it will result in maximum involvement and subsequent support from the students, staff and community.

Whatever modification procedures your district chooses to make, be certain that planning continues to provide a framework for viewing and coping with change. Planning does make a difference.

## Chapter 4

*Tennessee Department of Education  
and State Board of Education  
Strategic Plans*



# Tennessee Department of Education Strategic Plan



**ACADEMICS:** All Tennessee students will have access to a high-quality education, no matter where they live.

## Early Literacy Supports

Invest in a proven, coherent, statewide literacy program that includes high-quality materials, implementation coaching, and shared diagnostics for data review.

## High-Quality Instructional Materials

Invest in high-quality materials, a tool for standards alignment training, and implementation support to districts.

## Innovative Assessments

Build free, curriculum-aligned interim and formative assessments for districts to use.

## Career Exploration

Ensure every student has career exploration in middle school and a high school pathway that aligns to their interests and strengths.

**WHOLE CHILD:** Tennessee public schools will be equipped to serve the academic and non-academic needs of all kids.

## Supports

Ensure that schools and districts are able to quickly and appropriately respond to students in need through stronger resource mapping, online tools, statewide partnerships, and in-school resources.

## Character Education

Develop a Tennessee-specific character and citizenship education program that prepares students to make successful contributions to society.

## Exceptionalities

Develop regional hubs with the expertise in special education that districts need and create a statewide network that effectively supports students with disabilities through an online tool for families and educators to help identify and navigate resources.

**EDUCATORS:** Tennessee will set a new path for the education profession and be the top state to become and remain a teacher and leader.

## Recruitment

Create advanced courses for teaching as a profession in K-12, launch the Teacher Fellowship Initiative, expand "Grow Your Own" opportunities for prospective educators, and continue to support improvements to educator compensation.

## Preparation

This includes a strong understanding of the state standards, the use of high-quality instructional materials, and best practices for implementation.

## Pathways

Elevate teacher leaders through regional networks, professional development pathways, and state leadership roles.

## Development

Support the development of effective leadership structures in every school, and create cohorts of educators focused on building their degrees, certifications, and professional development.

We will set all students on a path to success.



## Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



### 2019-20 Master Plan

## Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



The State Board of Education is the governing and policy making body for Tennessee's pre-K-12 public education system. Its work touches all facets of education from accountability and evaluation to standards and teacher education.

The State Board of Education is comprised of 11 members representing the diversity of the state - one from each congressional district, plus a student member, and the executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission who serves as a non-voting ex officio member. Board members are unpaid Governor's appointees, confirmed by the General Assembly, and serve five-year terms.

You can find more information at [www.tn.gov/sbe](http://www.tn.gov/sbe)

# Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



State Board of Education July 2019

**Mr. Nick Darnell** – 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District

**Mr. Mike Edwards** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District

**Mr. Bob Eby** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District  
*Vice Chairman*

**Mr. Gordon Ferguson** – 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Ms. Elissa Kim** – 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Ms. Lillian Hartgrove** – 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District  
*Chairman*

**Ms. Wendy Tucker** – 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Vacant** – 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Mr. Darrell Cobbins** – 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

**Vacant** – Student Member

**Mr. Mike Krause** – Ex Officio  
Executive Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission

**Dr. Sara Heyburn Morrison**  
Executive Director, Tennessee State Board of Education

## Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



# Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



## The State Board's Vision

The State Board develops and maintains policies through the lens of the best interest of students. Our vision is to maintain Tennessee's position as the fastest improving state in the nation as well as enter the top half of all states on student outcomes by 2020. To do so, the State Board develops and maintains student-focused rules and policies and highlights research and best practices from Tennessee as well as nationwide.

## History of the Master Plan

The State Board adopted the guiding principles, student achievement goals, and strategic priority areas represented in this plan in 2015-16 as a five-year plan. The Master Plan complements the Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) five-year strategic plan that began in 2015.

Each year, the State Board revises its Master Plan to reflect key policy topics for the coming year. The State Board reviews progress toward the student achievement goals annually. The Board will conduct a full review of this plan in 2019-20 and reset it in advance of the 2020-21 school year at the conclusion of the five-year plan period.

## Guiding Principles

The Master Plan is founded on a commitment to serve all students and a focus on increased transparency.

- Serve All Students: We will work to ensure all students have the support and pathways they need for success.
- Transparency: We will commit to straightforward, honest, and timely communication on the work of the State Board.

## Student Achievement Goals

The State Board's work is guided by three student achievement goals.

- Achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): Tennessee will rank in the top half of states on NAEP by 2019.
- ACT/SAT Composite Score: The average ACT composite score in Tennessee will be a 21, or a comparable score on the SAT, by 2020.
- Post-Secondary Enrollment and Attainment: The majority of high school graduates from the class of 2020 will earn a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree.

## Strategic Priority Areas

Four strategic priorities will guide the Board's work and support the three key student achievement goals.

- High Expectations and Positive Learning Environments
- Great Teachers and Leaders
- High-Quality School Options
- Public Engagement and Oversight

# Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



## High Expectations and Positive Learning Environments

We will maintain rigorous academic standards through regular reviews of academic standards and requirements with opportunities for input from educators, parents, and the public. To support students' success with these standards, we will establish policies for safe learning environments that are conducive to high-quality instruction for all students.

### Priority Levers

#### High Expectations

The State Board of Education will continue to facilitate a transparent and rigorous process of promoting high academic expectations.

- Develop a long-range plan for standards review with TDOE that aligns with textbook adoption and educator training to allow districts to better plan for these events.<sup>1</sup>
- Conduct a thorough and transparent review of math standards with first reading of the standards occurring by July 2020.
- Lead a working group of state and district leaders to review current graduation requirements and coursework for alignment to current and future postsecondary and workforce expectations with the potential for policy changes as a result of this work.
- Ensure updates from TDOE are provided at each quarterly workshop on TNReady procurement, administration, and results.
- Assess and analyze progress toward the state's goals for meeting academic expectations, particularly in early-grades literacy.

#### Positive Learning Environments

The State Board of Education will use its public platform to highlight strong district practices and as well as areas for continued improvement that, taken together, will ensure classrooms and schools are safe, secure, and conducive to high-quality instruction.

#### *School Safety*

- Review research and implementation reports on effective district practices in the area of wraparound services, such as school-based mental health, and education for the whole child.
- Participate in state efforts regarding school safety and monitor the ongoing outcomes of school safety audits and district response team training.<sup>2</sup>

#### *School Climate*

- Review available school climate and chronic absenteeism data to inform policy conversations and decisions related to school environments and effective practices.
- Identify strategies for improving the implementation of the recently revised school counseling policy and program standards.
- Review licensure policies and other opportunities for increasing the availability of social workers and counselors.

<sup>1</sup> T.C.A. § 49-1-311; PC 270 of 2019

<sup>2</sup> PC 154 of 2019

# Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



## Great Teachers and Leaders

We will establish policies to ensure all students have access to great teachers and leaders.

### Policy Levers

#### Educator Preparation

The State Board of Education will continue to prioritize policies and tools that support the development and growth of highly effective educator preparation programs.

- Drive program approval decisions with outcome data for each Educator Preparation Program (EPP) undergoing a comprehensive review this year, as well as interim reviews and program improvement for all EPPs.
- Broaden the audience for the Educator Preparation Report Card by adjusting the web-hosted report to better meet the needs of multiple stakeholder groups, including prospective students, district human resources personnel, and educator preparation providers.
- Provide public access to meaningful leader preparation program data by building out this module of the Report Card with more information on program outcomes.
- Produce public reports on EPPs with effective programmatic practices in areas such as diversity and partnership strategies with school districts based on Report Card data.
- Work with other state leaders to refine policy and law to improve outcomes of EPPs and enhance accountability.

#### Educator Licensure

The State Board of Education will have a relentless focus on high standards for the teaching profession through effective licensure rule and policy.

- Encourage more candidates and more diverse candidates to enter teaching and school leadership through traditional and non-traditional pathways though both policy work and the board's public platform.
- Identify the extent to which licensure assessments are meaningful indicators of educators' classroom performance and analyze how any proposed changes to currently required assessments would affect educator supply in that content area.

#### Educator Licensure Discipline

The State Board of Education will refine and implement efficient, student-focused licensure discipline processes that will result in ensuring that all students have access to great teachers and leaders, and that student safety is protected.

- Provide ongoing information to the board regarding the number of cases received, the types of issues encountered and recommended actions, final disposition of cases, and any trends of misconduct.
- Increase communication with Tennessee school districts, as well as private and charter schools, around licensure discipline reporting requirements and participate in other regional workshops as requested.
- Ensure educators reported for licensure actions are acted upon in a timely manner by maintaining well-established procedures and workflow related to licensure discipline actions.
- Determine and advocate for additional resources as needed to conduct licensure discipline work with excellence and efficiency.

# Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



## High-Quality School Options

We will advance policies that support all students having access to high-quality schools.

### Policy Levers

#### Charter School Authorization

The State Board of Education will implement processes and procedures to fulfill its oversight and monitoring responsibilities as an LEA and a charter school authorizer.

- Continue serving as the LEA of the Board's authorized charter schools to ensure alignment with their charter agreements, state and federal laws, and State Board rules. The LEA functions include budgeting, oversight and monitoring, and reporting, as well as regularly reviewing progress of the authorized charter schools as a Board.
- Publish the annual report on the Board's authorized charter schools by January 1, 2020, and its use of the authorizer fee by December 1, 2019.<sup>3</sup>
- By June 1, 2020, develop a plan to transition responsibility of the Board's authorized charter schools to the newly-established Charter School Commission.<sup>4</sup> Support the new Commission as requested, with training, provision of policy resources, job shadowing, and informational interviews.

#### Rules and Policies regarding School Options

The State Board of Education will implement rules and policies to effectuate a variety of state laws regarding school options.

- Improve clarity and alignment between existing State Board rules and policies regarding distance and e-learning, virtual schools, and the Course Access Program so that students statewide can access high-quality coursework.
- Develop the charter school authorizer evaluation framework, incorporating the State Board's –quality authorizing standards, by June 30, 2020.<sup>5</sup>
- Develop and approve State Board rules regarding the timeline and process for the charter school amendment petition and appeal by June 30, 2020.<sup>6</sup>
- Work with the TDOE to redesign and approve a charter renewal process aligned to quality authorizing standards by January 1, 2020.
- Develop and approve rules for implementing ESAs in accordance with timelines set forth in law, through collaborative work with TDOE and other stakeholders.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> T.C.A. § 49-13-118

<sup>4</sup> PC 219 of 2019

<sup>5</sup> PC 219 of 2019

<sup>6</sup> PC 219 of 2019

<sup>7</sup> PC 506 of 2019

# Tennessee State Board of Education Master Plan



## Public Engagement and Oversight

We commit to collaborative governance, effective oversight, and engagement with Tennessee citizens.

### Policy Levers

#### Collaborative Governance

The State Board's members and staff will engage with other agencies of state government and contribute to collaborative efforts on behalf of Tennessee students.

- Transparently lead the work of multiple agencies to develop the annual Basic Education Program (BEP) Review Committee Report identifying state funding priorities.<sup>8</sup>
- Represent the Board's interests and priorities as members of intergovernmental task forces, workgroups, and other relevant committees.
- Collaborate with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to facilitate an effective annual joint meeting and additional opportunities to engage on shared priorities.
- Develop and implement a plan with the TDOE for ongoing, comprehensive review of policies and rules to ensure consistency with state law and current practice.<sup>9</sup>

#### Effective Oversight

The State Board of Education will work to ensure that the rules and policies it enacts are effective in supporting student success.

- Faithfully execute the legal responsibilities of the Board as partners with the Governor and General Assembly.
- Ensure that independent research informs members' decisions on policies and rules.
- Provide oversight through routinely reviewing and discussing all Board policies and rules.
- Develop an inventory of how the TDOE monitors districts for compliance with various SBE rules and policies.

#### Board Member Engagement

Members of the State Board of Education will make concerted efforts to reach out to stakeholders within their districts and across the state.

- Host "Days in the District" to develop and maintain relationships with key regional stakeholders. Identify ways to include a variety of community stakeholders in these events.
- Publish opinion editorials written by members each academic year on a topic they identify, with support from staff as desired.
- Continue to develop relationships between board members and legislators to familiarize them with the Board's work and Master Plan goals.
- Refine existing presentations and handouts that explain the State Board's role, particularly in comparison with TDOE and THEC's roles, so that members and staff may easily share this information with various constituent groups at conferences, meetings, and other gatherings.

<sup>8</sup> T.C.A. § 49-1-302

<sup>9</sup> PC 929 of 2018

## Chapter 5

*Paths to Promise*



# Tennessee State Board of Education High School Policy

<b>TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION</b>	
<b>HIGH SCHOOL POLICY</b>	<b>2.103</b>

SOME OF THE REQUIREMENTS IN THIS POLICY MAY BE SUPERSEDED BY EMERGENCY RULES DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY. PLEASE REFER TO THE EMERGENCY RULES PASSED ON FINAL READING ON [APRIL 9, 2020](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

## POLICY SECTIONS

- (1) Graduation Requirements
- (2) Move on When Ready
- (3) Graduation with Honors, State Honors, and State Distinction
- (4) Plan of Study
- (5) Work-Based Learning Framework
- (6) Assessment
- (7) Credit Recovery
- (8) Eliminating Barriers to Education

## **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

- (1) All students shall have access to a rigorous education that prepares them for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. All coursework shall be aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards for each subject and course.
- (2) Schools shall minimize the tracking of students by ability, eliminate core classes taught below the college preparation level, and provide all students a challenging course of study.
- (3) All students shall meet the following course graduation requirements:

English	4 credits
Mathematics	4 credits
Science	3 credits
Social Studies	3 credits
Personal Finance	0.5 credit
Wellness	1 credit
Physical Education	0.5 credit
World Language	2 credits
Fine Arts	1 credits
Elective Focus	3 credits

- (4) To earn a regular high school diploma, students shall:
  - (a) Earn the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum;

# Tennessee State Board of Education

## High School Policy

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
HIGH SCHOOL POLICY	2.103

- (b) Complete the ACT or SAT prior to graduation, if the student was enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year; and
  - (c) Have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline.
- (5) Students with disabilities shall be included in regular classes to the maximum extent possible and with appropriate support and accommodations. To earn a regular high school diploma, students with disabilities shall earn the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum.
- (6) A special education diploma shall be awarded at the end of the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of high school to students with disabilities who have:
- (a) Received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an individualized education program (IEP);
  - (b) Not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma; and
  - (c) Have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct.
- Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work toward a regular high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.
- (7) An occupational diploma may be awarded to students with disabilities at the end of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of high school who have (1) not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma; (2) received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP; (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct; (4) have completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA) created by the Tennessee Department of Education; and (5) have completed two (2) years of paid or non-paid work experience. The determination that an occupational diploma is the goal for a student with a disability will be made at the conclusion of the student's tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade year or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who obtain the occupational diploma may continue to work toward a regular high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.
- (8) Beginning with students entering the ninth (9th) grade in 2018, an alternate academic diploma may be awarded to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities at the end of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of high school who have (1) participated in the high school alternate assessments; (2) earned the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum; (3) received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP; (4) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct; and (5) have completed a transition assessment(s) that

# Tennessee State Board of Education

## High School Policy

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
HIGH SCHOOL POLICY	2.103

measures, at a minimum, postsecondary education and training, employment, independent living, and community involvement. The required credits may be earned either through the state-approved standards or through alternate academic diploma course requirements defined by the Department of Education. A student who earns an alternate academic diploma shall continue to be eligible for special education services under IDEA until the student receives a regular high school diploma or through the school year in which the student turns twenty-two (22).

- (9) Students must complete four (4) credits of English, including English I, English II, English III, and English IV.
- (10) Students must complete four (4) credits of mathematics including Algebra I and II, Geometry or the equivalent Integrated Math I, II, and III, and another mathematics course beyond Algebra I or Integrated Math I. Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year. Students who complete any of the required math credits prior to the ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade may receive graduation credit for that coursework; however, those students are still required to enroll in a mathematics course during each high school year.

The Bridge Math course is recommended for students who have not scored 19 or higher on the ACT mathematics subtest or a 460 on the SAT mathematics subtest by the beginning of the senior year. Other factors like career interest, study habits, etc. can be used to determine twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade placement.

Students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or the equivalent Integrated Math I and Integrated Math II). The required number of credits in mathematics will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.

- (11) Students shall complete three (3) credits of Science. Students shall complete Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and a third (3<sup>rd</sup>) lab science. Students with a qualifying disability as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Biology I and two (2) other lab science credits. The required number of credits in science will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.
- (12) Students shall complete three (3) credits of Social Studies. The content of the social studies courses will be consistent with Tennessee Academic Standards and with admissions requirements of Tennessee public institutions of higher education. Required courses include United States History and Geography, World History and Geography, Economics, and United States Government and Civics. In order to meet the Social Studies course credit requirements to earn a full diploma upon graduation from high school, each student must take and pass the civics test developed by the LEA, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-408.

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- (13) Students shall complete one-half (½) credit in Personal Finance. Three (3) years of JROTC may be substituted for one-half (½) credit of Personal Finance if the JROTC instructor attends the Personal Finance training.
- (14) Students shall complete one (1) credit in wellness. The wellness courses will integrate concepts from health, physical fitness, and wellness and may be taught by a team of teachers from one (1) or more teaching areas, including health, physical education, family and nutrition sciences, and health sciences education. Participation in marching band and interscholastic athletics may not be substituted for this aspect of the graduation requirements.
- Upon the choice of the student, credit for basic training may be substituted for the required credit in lifetime wellness and credit in one (1) elective course or for credit in two (2) elective courses.
- (15) Students shall complete one-half (½) credit in Physical Education. This requirement may be met by substituting a documented and equivalent time of physical activity in marching band, JROTC, cheerleading, interscholastic athletics, school sponsored intramural athletics, and other areas approved by the local board of education.
- (16) Students shall complete two (2) credits of the same world language. The credit requirement for world language may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.
- (17) Students shall complete one (1) credit in Fine Arts. The credit requirement for fine arts may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.
- (18) Students shall complete three (3) credits in an elective focus. All students shall pursue a focused program of study designed to prepare them for the workforce and postsecondary study. The intent of the elective focus is to provide students with an opportunity to explore a particular academic area in greater depth.
- (a) The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, Cambridge, or other areas approved by the local board of education. Students completing a CTE elective focus shall complete three (3) credits in the same CTE career cluster or state-approved program of study.
- (b) The director of schools may waive the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) credit requirement of the elective focus during a student's senior year if the completion of the third(3<sup>rd</sup>)elective focus credit would prevent or delay graduation. This waiver option includes those students who transfer during the junior or senior year to a Tennessee high school from a school in another state or from a non-public school.

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- (19) Computer education is not specifically listed in the graduation requirements. However, T.C.A. § 49-6-1010 requires every candidate for graduation to have received a full year of computer education at some time during the candidate's educational career. Computer science and courses such as digital art and design, architectural and engineering design, programming and logic, web design, and website development will also satisfy this requirement and serve as a complement to a student's elective focus.
- (20) Local high schools must accept postsecondary credits as a substitution for an aligned graduation requirement course, including general education and elective focus courses for those students who take and pass dual enrollment courses at a postsecondary institution for credit.
- (21) A course schedule that presents students with the option of taking course work for the first time (i.e., first-attempt courses) during the summer should be reserved for students on an advanced or accelerated learning path. Credits received for any first-attempt courses taken during the summer may count towards the course requirements during the subsequent school year. Any applicable End of Course examinations must be taken during the fall semester immediately following the summer course. Credit may not be given in a summer course with an associated End of Course examination (that is a first attempt at the credit) until the student takes the examination. Students taking remediation courses during the summer may receive credit immediately upon passing. Remediation courses are those courses previously attempted with a completed End of Course examination, as applicable.
- (22) Students in middle school may take coursework for high school credit. If a student completes any of the State Board-required high school credits prior to grade nine (9), they shall receive graduation credit for that coursework.

### MOVE ON WHEN READY

- (1) The *Move on When Ready Act* provides public high school students who wish to graduate early with the opportunity to graduate high school early and gain entry into a postsecondary institution.
- (2) A public high school student may complete an early high school graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two (2)-year institution of higher education or conditional entry into a public four (4)-year institution of higher education, if the student fulfills each of the following requirements:
  - (a) Earns eighteen (18) credits that include:
    - 1. English I, II, III, and IV
    - 2. Algebra I and II<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Integrated Math I, II, and III may fulfill the Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry requirements in districts that offer the Integrated Math sequence.

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- 3. Geometry
  - 4. United States History
  - 5. Two (2) courses in the same world language;
  - 6. One (1) course selected from:
    - (i) Economics
    - (ii) Government
    - (iii) World Civilizations
    - (iv) World Geography
  - 7. One (1) course selected from:
    - (i) History and appreciation of visual and performing arts
    - (ii) A standards-based arts course, which may include studio art, band, chorus, dance, or other performing arts
  - 8. Health and Physical Education (Wellness)
  - 9. Biology
  - 10. Chemistry
- (b) Has a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2 on the Uniform Grading System four (4) point scale;
- (c) Scores at the on-track or mastered level on each end-of-course assessment taken<sup>2</sup>;
- (d) Meets benchmark scores of twenty-one (21) or higher composite score on the ACT or an equivalent score on the SAT;
- (e) Achieves a passing score on a nationally recognized world language proficiency assessment; and
- (f) Completes two (2) early postsecondary courses.
- (3) A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program may take two (2) high school English courses in an academic year.
- (4) A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program shall complete an intent form available from the Department of Education and submit it to her or his high school principal and the Department of Education.
- (5) A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program is exempt from any additional graduation requirements.

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<sup>2</sup> Excluding end-of-course assessments taken during the student's final semester prior to early graduation

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- (6) A student who completes the Move on When Ready program shall be awarded a regular high school diploma.

### GRADUATION WITH HONORS, STATE HONORS, AND STATE DISTINCTION

- (1) A variety of honors and distinctions may be awarded to graduating students meeting state or locally specified criteria. Each local school board shall develop a policy prescribing how students meeting the following requirements will be noted and recognized.
- (2) School systems may design student recognition programs that allow students to graduate with honors if they have met the graduation requirements and have attained an overall grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. School systems may set a higher GPA at their discretion. School systems may specify additional requirements, such as requiring students to demonstrate performance of distinction in one (1) or more areas.
- (3) Students who score at or above all the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will graduate with state honors.
- (4) Students shall be recognized as graduating with district distinction if they have met the graduation requirements, have obtained an overall grade point average of at least a 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale, and have earned an industry certification in his or her career interest category or a regionally-recognized industry certification.
- (5) A student who earns a composite score of nineteen (19) or higher on the ACT, or an equivalent score on the SAT, and earns a capstone industry certification as promoted by the Department of Education, shall be recognized as a Tennessee Tri-Star Scholar upon graduation from high school. The public high school shall recognize the student's achievement at the graduation ceremony by placing an appropriate designation on the student's diploma, or other credential, or by providing a ribbon or cord to be worn with graduation regalia. The student shall be noted as a Tennessee Tri-Star Scholar in the school's graduation program.
- (6) Students will be recognized as graduating with "state distinction" by attaining a B or better average and completing one (1) of the following:
  - (a) Earn a national and/or state recognized industry certification;
  - (b) Participate in at least one (1) of the Governor's Schools;
  - (c) Participate in one (1) of the state's ALL State musical organizations;

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- (d) Earn statewide recognition or award at a skill- or knowledge-based state tournament, convention, or competition hosted by a statewide student organization, and/or qualify for national recognition by a national student organization;
  - (e) Be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist;
  - (f) Attain a score of thirty-one (31) or higher composite score on the ACT or SAT equivalent;
  - (g) Attain a score of three (3) or higher on at least two advanced placement exams;
  - (h) Successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme; or
  - (i) Earn twelve (12) or more semester hours of postsecondary credit.
- (7) LEAs shall recognize students who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one (1) or more languages in addition to English with a Seal of Biliteracy. Students receiving this recognition shall meet the following criteria:
- (a) Complete all English language arts (ELA) requirements for graduation with an overall grade point average of 3.0 or higher in those classes;
  - (b) Demonstrate English proficiency through one (1) of the following:
    1. Score at the on-track or mastered level on each ELA end-of-course assessment taken;
    2. Score three (3) or higher on an Advanced Placement English Language or English Literature exam; B1 or higher on a Cambridge International English exam; or four (4) or higher on an International Baccalaureate English exam;
    3. Score 22 or higher on the ACT Reading subtest or 480 or higher on the SAT evidence-based reading and writing subtest; or
    4. Score 4.5 or higher on the WIDA Access, if the student is an English learner; and
  - (c) Demonstrate proficiency in a world language through one (1) of the following:
    1. Score Intermediate-Mid or higher in all three (3) communication modes (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) on a world language proficiency assessment recognized by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL);
    2. Score three (3) or higher on an Advanced Placement world language exam; B1 or higher on a Cambridge International world language exam; or four (4) or higher on an International Baccalaureate world language exam;
    3. Score at the Intermediate level or higher on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI: ASL);

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4. Pass a foreign government's approved non-English language exam, or score at a level comparable to Intermediate-mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale on another country's secondary level standardized exam in the country's non-English native language; or
5. Score at a level comparable to Intermediate-Mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale on an LEA developed alternate model. Alternate models may only be used if the identified world language does not have an associated nationally recognized assessment and must address communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities.

Each school shall document and track students' progress toward the Seal of Biliteracy. Each local board shall affix an appropriate insignia to the diploma of the qualifying student indicating that the student has been awarded a Tennessee Seal of Biliteracy.

- (8) Students who voluntarily complete at least ten (10) hours of community service each semester the student is in attendance at a public high school shall be recognized at their graduation ceremony.
- (9) Students graduating with a gold or platinum medal on National Career Readiness Certificate (WorkKeys) shall be recognized at their graduation ceremony.
- (10) Students graduating with a district-developed work ethic distinction shall be recognized at their graduation ceremony.

### PLAN OF STUDY

- (1) At age fourteen (14) or prior to the ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade, all students, including students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), shall develop an initial four (4)-year plan of focused and purposeful high school study. The plan of study shall be reviewed annually by the student and school counselor or faculty advisor and revised based on the student's academic progress and changes in the student's interests and career goals. Results of various types of assessments will also be used in adjusting the plan of study.
- (2) As part of the of the plan of focused and purposeful high school study, all students shall take a career interest inventory during either middle school or grade nine (9) and a career aptitude assessment during grade seven (7) or grade eight (8), and use the results to inform their plan of study.
- (3) High school and middle grades faculty will collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school.

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- (4) The plan of focused and purposeful high school study shall:
- (a) Cover either grades nine through twelve (9-12) or grades eight through twelve (8-12);
  - (b) Connect the student's goals for high school to the courses or training that shall equip the student with the skills necessary to meet his or her goals after high school;
  - (c) Consider a variety of indicators, such as student academic strengths and needs, attendance, behavior, and course grades;
  - (d) Include information regarding programs of study, a student's readiness for specific early post-secondary opportunities (EPSOs), and elective focuses aligned to the student's interest inventory results;
  - (e) Provide students with opportunities to begin building technical skills in a field of interest, in addition to employability skills required to be successful in that job; and
  - (f) If applicable, identify possible transition service needs of a student under the applicable components of the student's IEP.

## WORK-BASED LEARNING FRAMEWORK

- (1) Students will have access to a system of structured work-based learning (WBL) experiences that allows them to apply classroom theories to practical problems and to explore career options. The following Work-Based Learning Framework will govern all WBL experiences. The Tennessee Department of Education will provide school systems with a Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide consistent with this framework to address training requirements, program expectations, and legal requirements.
- (2) Structure of the Program. Structured WBL experiences may be paid or unpaid, may occur in public, private, or non-profit organizations, or on-site at the school; they may occur during or outside of school hours and may result in the attainment of academic credit when WBL course standards are met. In all instances, all federal and state labor laws shall be observed.
- (3) Coordination of the Program. A Work-Based Learning Coordinator, in conjunction with a team of supervising teachers as outlined by the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide, will be responsible for: (1) the recruitment of appropriate work sites; (2) coordination of ongoing communications with workplace mentors; (3) facilitation of instruction that meets the WBL Framework requirements and WBL course standards where applicable; and (4) all required documentation related to student work, safety training, and job

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placements as outlined by the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Implementation Guide.

- (4) Supervision of Students. A designated workplace mentor will supervise each student. Regular monitoring will be provided by a dedicated supervising teacher or the WBL Coordinator to ensure WBL Framework requirements are met as outlined in the Work- Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- (5) Development of Personalized Learning Plans. A personalized learning plan will be created for each student and will address applicable employability skills, including, but not limited to, (1) the application of academic and technical knowledge and skills, (2) career knowledge and navigation skills, (3) 21<sup>st</sup>Century learning and innovation skills, and personal and social skills. The personalized learning plan will also include safety trainings appropriate to the WBL experience as covered by the supervising teacher, the workplace mentor, or both, and as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- (6) Student Assessment Using Multiple Measures. Students must exhibit work readiness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills as determined by the supervising teacher and workplace mentor and consistent with the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide before beginning a WBL experience. During the experience, students will practice the employability skills identified in their personalized learning plan. Students will demonstrate their knowledge and skill attainment through the development of artifacts and/or portfolios that may include, but are not limited to: work products, evaluations, original research, reflections, and presentations as outlined in the Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.
- (7) Evaluation of Program Quality. Local boards of education will adopt a process for evaluation and assessment to ensure WBL experiences are of high quality for the student. Recommended evaluation tools are provided in the Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide.

### ASSESSMENT

- (1) The assessment program is consistent with legislative intent as specified in the accountability provisions of the state *Education Improvement Act* (1992) and the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015). The assessment program focuses on enabling all students to succeed in challenging coursework by beginning with use of results of the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) and eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) grade Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) for diagnostic purposes to determine the appropriate educational experience for entering ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade students. School systems will determine the appropriate array of programs; schools will incorporate strategies into their school improvement process. The focus must be on providing high quality instruction, sometimes over

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extended periods of time, so that all students can be successful. Schools will also use examinations administered in high school for diagnostic purposes.

- (2) Rationale for Assessment. The purposes to be served and the rationale for testing include the following:
- (a) Improvement of Student Learning in Major Content Areas. The examinations will align with the state standards and will include both content knowledge and critical thinking skills.
  - (b) Preparation for Further Learning. Examinations occurring early in the student's high school program of study will help prepare them for success in subjects taken later.
  - (c) Diagnostic Information. The examinations will help students to improve their performance and help prepare them for the ACT, SAT, and successful entry into postsecondary educational programs.
  - (d) School and Program Improvement. The examinations will provide data that can be used to improve the effectiveness of the instructional delivery system at the school and the school system.
  - (e) Accountability. The examinations will provide for teacher, school, and school system accountability. To provide for school and school system accountability, the proposed program provides for examinations in four areas: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These academic areas are important for the successful transition to work and postsecondary study.
  - (f) Students will take the examinations in the year they complete the relevant content standards and course work or at the earliest available test administration.
- (3) End of Course Examinations. End of Course (EOC) examinations shall be administered in the following subjects: English I, English II, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, U.S. History, and Biology I.
- (a) The state shall report scores for schools and school systems for academic achievement and academic gain.
  - (b) Students shall take the examinations in the semester they complete the relevant course work or at the earliest available test administration. Only students who are enrolled in a course with an associated End of Course examination shall take the End of Course examination. Students enrolled in a substituting course without an End of Course examination explicitly tied to the State Board of Education-approved content standards

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of that course shall not take an End of Course examination. This exemption applies to all substituting courses, including, but not limited to, Advanced Placement, Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate, local and statewide dual enrollment, and local and statewide dual credit courses.

- (c) Students enrolled in courses with End of Course examinations may not withdraw from such courses after being enrolled in the course for at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the instructional days in the course.
- (d) Students with disabilities shall be provided accommodations in accordance with their IEP or 504 plan. English Learner proficiency level shall also be considered when determining if accommodations are needed. Needed accommodations and supports shall be reviewed at least annually.
- (e) The IEP team must determine if a student with a disability should participate in the general assessment with or without accommodations or in the alternate assessment. To participate in an alternate assessment, the IEP team shall determine that alternate assessment is more appropriate than the general assessment and that the student meets all three of the following eligibility requirements:
  1. The student has a significant cognitive disability and adaptive skills that result in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations and modifications;
  2. The student is learning content linked to and derived from the Tennessee Academic Standards as indicated in the Alternate Academic Standards; and
  3. The student requires substantial modifications, adaptations, or supports to meaningfully access the subject area content and requires intensive individualized instruction in order to acquire and generalize knowledge.
- (f) The IEP team shall rule out that the inability to achieve the state grade-level achievement expectations is the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences. Participation in the alternate assessment shall be determined at least annually. A student who meets the eligibility criteria and whose IEP team determines participation in the alternate assessment is appropriate shall be assessed in all four (4) content areas: ELA, math, science, and social studies.
- (g) Results of individual student performance from all administered End of Course examinations shall be provided in a timely fashion to facilitate the inclusion of these results as part of the student's grade. Each LEA must establish a local board policy that details the methodology used and the required weighting for incorporating student scores on EOC examinations into final course grades. If an LEA does not receive its

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students' End of Course examination scores at least five (5) instructional days before the scheduled end of the course, then the LEA may choose not to include its students' End of Course examination scores in the students' final course grade. The weight of the EOC examination on the student's final average shall be determined by the local board of education from a range of no less than fifteen (15%) and no more than twenty-five (25%).

- (4) Eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) Grade Assessment. As a strategy for assessing student readiness for postsecondary education, students enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year shall take either the ACT or SAT. To receive a regular high school diploma, all students enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade year must take either the ACT or SAT.
- (5) United States Civics Test. Beginning July 1, 2019, all high school students must take and pass a United States civics test in order to meet the Social Studies course credit requirement to earn a regular diploma.
  - (a) The LEA shall prepare the civics test. The test shall meet the requirements outlined in T.C.A. § 49-6-408.
  - (b) A student shall pass the test if the student correctly answers at least seventy percent (70%) of the questions. The LEA may provide students with the opportunity to take the test as many times as necessary. A passing score on the civics test must be noted on a student's transcript.
  - (c) The U.S. civics test shall be administered to a student who has an IEP with the accommodations and/or modifications that are deemed necessary by the IEP team.
  - (d) The Tennessee Department of Education shall recognize a school on the department's website as a United States civics all-star school for any school year in which all of the school's seniors receiving a regular diploma make a passing grade of eighty-five percent (85%) or higher.
- (6) Project-based Civics Assessment. All LEAs shall implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades nine through twelve (9-12).
  - (a) The project-based assessment shall be developed by the LEA, measure the civics learning objectives contained in the social studies standards, and allow students to demonstrate understanding and relevance of public policy, the structure of federal, state and local governments, and both the Tennessee and the United States constitutions.

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diagnostic assessment. Students who mastered below fifty percent (50%) of the course standards as evidenced by the course grade in a non-credit recovery section of the course or a diagnostic assessment, must re-take the course.

- (b) If a student is seeking to recover credit for the first semester of a two (2)-semester course, the student may not receive the full credit for the course until they have enrolled in and passed the second semester of the course and taken any applicable End of Course examinations.
  - (c) Local board of education credit recovery policies may set additional requirements for admission to and removal from credit recovery programs including but not limited to attendance, discipline, availability of coursework, availability of space, appropriate progress, and grades.
  - (d) Local boards of education shall track and designate students enrolled in credit recovery courses as directed by the Tennessee Department of Education.
- (4) Instruction.
- (a) Students enrolled in any credit recovery courses must be assigned to a teacher of record.
  - (b) Credit recovery teachers of record must be endorsed and certified in any content area(s) for which they oversee credit recovery courses.
  - (c) Credit recovery teachers of record must be responsible for reviewing initial student diagnostic results; assisting in determining appropriate goals, coursework, and assignments for students; working closely with credit recovery facilitators on class content and instruction; and reviewing final student work.
  - (d) Credit recovery facilitators may be responsible for day-to-day oversight and facilitation of credit recovery programs, under the guidance of the credit recovery teacher of record.
  - (e) Local boards of education shall ensure that credit recovery facilitators receive training pertaining to the credit recovery course organization, online instruction management, and related technology.
  - (f) LEAs shall ensure that all credit recovery courses:
    1. Align with Tennessee's current academic standards for the relevant course content area, as approved by the State Board of Education.
    2. Are able to differentiate instruction to address individual student growth needs based on diagnostic assessment or End of Course data.

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- (g) Credit Recovery content may be delivered through instructional technology.
- (h) Students in Credit Recovery programs:
  - 1. Shall complete a course standard-specific diagnostic to determine standard-specific goals.
  - 2. Shall meet individual standard-specific goals in a flexible time frame as established by identified student need.
  - 3. May be required to complete additional assignments as directed by local board of education credit recovery policy and credit recovery teacher of record.
  - 4. Shall master all individualized standard-specific goals and assignments as established by the diagnostic process and the credit recovery teacher of record, in order to earn credit.
- (5) Grades.
  - (a) Students passing credit recovery shall receive a grade of seventy percent (70%).
  - (b) The student transcript shall denote that the credit was attained through credit recovery.
  - (c) The original failing grade may also be listed on the transcript, but shall not factor into the student's GPA, in accordance with the State Board of Education's Uniform Grading Policy 3.301.

## ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

- (1) In accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act, state and local educational agencies must develop and implement policies to remove barriers related to the education of homeless children and youths and other at-risk youth.
- (2) Each local education agency (LEA) shall establish procedures to eliminate barriers to enrollment and retention for students identified as homeless, migrant, foster, or military, as defined in state and federal law. LEA procedures shall include:
  - (a) An assurance that the local procedures are aligned to all relevant state and federal laws for the identified classifications of students;
  - (b) A procedure for determining the appropriate school, grade, and course placement that is in the student's best interest, including:
    - 1. A transcript analysis;
    - 2. Consultation with multiple stakeholders, as available; and
    - 3. A written justification for the placement decision;

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- (c) A provision that grades cannot be lowered solely due to absences or gaps in enrollment caused by changes in school or home placements, rather than due to missed assignments that the student did not make up despite opportunities to do so;
- (d) A process for providing tiered support for attendance for students identified as at-risk for chronic absenteeism; and
- (e) credit accrual plan that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the qualifying student, including:
  1. A process for granting full or partial credit for unresolved or incomplete coursework that was completed before the date of withdrawal or transfer;
  2. An alternative means of completing required coursework or demonstrating mastery on required coursework, in order to facilitate on-time graduation; and
  3. An exemption from local graduation requirements that exceed the State Board minimum requirements.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

**RULES  
OF  
THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**CHAPTER 0520-01-03  
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL  
OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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**0520-01-03-01 APPROVAL OF SCHOOLS.**

- (1) Inspections of Schools.

The Department of Education shall make periodic inspections of the schools under its control. These inspections shall be made to determine the extent to which local school systems operate in compliance with State Board of Education rules and regulations and to verify the information received on reports from local school officials.

- (2) Approval Classifications for School Systems.

Each school system shall be classified as approved or non-approved. School systems classified as non-approved by the Commissioner of Education shall receive a written explanation of the reasons for such classification and shall be afforded the opportunity to respond. The Commissioner's notification shall include a time by which corrective action shall be completed by the school system. If such corrective action is not taken within the time specified, the Commissioner shall impose sanctions on the school system which may include withholding part or all of state school funding to the non-approved system.

- (3) Reports on School System Compliance with the Rules and Regulations.

The Department of Education shall make an annual report to the State Board of Education regarding each school system's compliance with the rules and regulations. The report shall include the approval status of each local school system, deficiencies identified by the school in the approval process, an assessment of action needed to attain approval, local school system response, and sanctions imposed upon systems which do not comply.

- (4) Reports on Waivers Granted by the Commissioner of Education.

The Department of Education shall post to its website any waiver of rules, regulations or policies granted by the department within five (5) business days of the Commissioner's approval. The waivers shall include the name of the system requesting the waiver and an explanation of the waiver requested.

- (5) Internal Audit.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.01, continued)

The Department of Education shall maintain an internal audit function which shall assist the Department in the inspection of schools. Internal audit reports shall be presented to the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education.

**Authority:** T.C.A. § 49-1-302. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed October 1, 1985; effective October 31, 1985. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019.

### 0520-01-03-.02 ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS.

(1) Length of School Day for Students.

- (a) The minimum length of the school day for students shall be six and one-half (6½) hours.
- (b) School systems may provide for professional development during the school day under one (1) of the following options:
  1. School systems. School systems which elect to extend the school day to at least seven (7) hours for the purpose of meeting instructional time requirements missed due to dangerous or extreme weather conditions may allocate a portion of that extension for the purpose of faculty professional development, IEP team meetings, school-wide or system-wide instructional planning meetings, parent/teacher conferences, or other similar meetings, as permitted in T.C.A. § 49-6-3004(e)(1), under the following conditions:
    - (i) Prior to the beginning of the school year, the school system shall designate how many days shall be allocated for dangerous or extreme weather conditions and how many shall be allocated for student dismissals for faculty professional development, IEP team meetings, school-wide or system-wide instructional planning meetings, parent/teacher conferences, or other similar meetings. The total number of days shall not exceed thirteen (13).
    - (ii) Faculty professional development shall be consistent with standards and guidelines established by the State Board of Education.
    - (iii) School systems shall submit their plans for the allocation of excess time to the Commissioner for approval.
  2. Schools. School systems may adopt policies providing for individual schools to have school days of at least seven (7) hours in order to accumulate instructional time to be used for periodic early student dismissals for the purpose of faculty professional development. The following conditions shall apply to school systems exercising this option:
    - (i) Early dismissals shall not exceed the equivalent of thirteen (13) days and shall not exceed three and one-half (3½) hours in any week.
    - (ii) Students shall attend school one-hundred eighty (180) days.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.02, continued)

(iii) Faculty professional development shall be consistent with standards and guidelines established by the State Board of Education.

(c) The length of the kindergarten day shall not be less than four (4) hours. Double sessions in any kindergarten program may be permitted so long as both sessions meet all legal requirements for kindergarten programs.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302 and 49-6-3004. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment and new rule filed October 15, 1979; effective January 8, 1980. Amendment filed April 14, 1980; effective May 28, 1980. Amendment filed November 13, 1981; effective March 16, 1982. Amendment filed April 13, 1982; effective May 28, 1982. Repeal and new rule filed April 18, 1983; effective May 18, 1983. Amendment filed January 6, 1984; effective April 15, 1984. Amendment filed August 20, 1984; effective November 13, 1984. Amendment filed October 3, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed March 25, 1986; effective June 14, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed July 10, 1986; effective October 29, 1986. Amendment filed October 29, 1986; effective December 13, 1986. Amendment filed July 22, 1987; effective October 28, 1987. Amendment filed November 18, 1987; effective February 28, 1988. Amendment filed July 21, 1988; effective October 29, 1988. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed November 3, 1993; effective March 30, 1994. Amendment filed March 14, 1995; effective July 28, 1995. Amendment filed April 29, 1996; effective August 28, 1996. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019.

## 0520-01-03-03 ADMINISTRATION OF SCHOOLS.

(1) Teacher Assignment. Teachers shall be on duty at least seven (7) hours per day and such additional time as the administrative organization requires.

(2) Salaries and Licensure for all Licensed Personnel.

(a) The employment standards and licensure requirements established by the State Board of Education shall be applicable to all licensed personnel employed by a local board of education without regard to the source of financial support.

(b) A salary schedule applicable to all licensed personnel shall be approved by the local board of education.

(3) Class Size for Grades Kindergarten (K) through Twelve (12).

(a) Local boards of education shall have policies providing for class sizes in grades kindergarten (K) through twelve (12) in accordance with the following:

Grade Level	Average Class Size	Maximum Class Size
K-3	20	25
4-6	25	30
7-12	30	35
Career and Technical Education	20	25

(b) The average class size for a grade level unit (such as the unit K-3) shall not exceed the stated average, although individual classes within that grade level unit may exceed the average.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

- (c) No class shall exceed the prescribed maximum size.
  
- (d) The average class size and the maximum class size shall be based on regular classroom teaching positions, exclusive of principal, assistant principal, counselor, elementary art, elementary music, elementary physical education, librarian, special education, or other specialized positions.
  
- (e) Class size limits may be exceeded in such areas as typewriting and instrumental and vocal music classes, provided that the effectiveness of the instructional program in these areas is not impaired.
  
- (f) LEAs may seek a waiver from the Commissioner to extend the Career and Technical Education (CTE) class size average in grades nine through twelve (9-12), provided that individual class sizes do not exceed the maximum class size set for CTE classes.
  
- (g) Local school systems shall not establish split-grade classes for the purpose of complying with the provisions of the class size averages and maximums. However, these provisions do not prevent school systems from using multi-aged classes.
  
- (h) Local boards of education must approve the establishment of any split-grade classes for any purpose, provided that split-grade classes shall not be established for the purpose of compliance with the provisions herein.
  
- (i) The average class size specified for the grade levels involved in split-grade classes will be the maximum size allowed in such classes.
  
- (4) Planning Time.
  - (a) Local boards of education shall provide full-time classroom teachers in grades kindergarten (K) through twelve (12) with individual duty-free planning periods during the established instructional day.
  
  - (b) Individual planning time shall consist of two and one-half (2½) hours each week during which teachers have no other assigned duties or responsibilities other than planning for instruction. The two and one-half (2½) hours may be divided on a daily or other basis.
  
  - (c) Individual duty-free planning time shall not occur during any period that teachers are entitled to duty-free lunch.
  
  - (d) Any school system which is providing an individual duty-free planning period by extending the school day by thirty (30) minutes as of the beginning of the 2000-01 school year may continue such practice and satisfy the planning time requirements.
  
  - (e) The director of schools shall report annually to the Department of Education regarding compliance with the individual duty-free planning time requirement.
  
- (5) Duty Free Lunch Period. In schools providing a lunch period for students, all teachers shall be provided each day with a lunch period during which they shall not have assigned duties. The lunch period for each teacher shall be at least the same amount of time as that allowed for students.
  
- (6) Summer Schools.
  - (a) Summer schools shall be under the control and management of the local board of education having jurisdiction.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

- (b) The following shall be required for grades nine (9) through twelve (12):
  - 1. State academic standards shall be used for all courses.
  - 2. Summer school teachers shall be licensed and hold endorsements in the subject areas in which they are teaching.
  - 3. Any course work successfully completed in an approved summer school is fully transferable to any other approved school.
- (7) Student Evaluation in Grades Kindergarten (K) through grade eight (8).
  - (a) The student evaluation program for grades kindergarten (K) through grade eight (8) shall consist of the following:
    - 1. A criterion-referenced test will be administered in subjects and grade levels in accordance with policy of the State Board of Education.
    - 2. Based on achievement data from the benchmark years three (3), five (5), and eight (8), there shall be a research-based intervention initiated by the local education agency for students scoring below proficient in reading, language, and mathematics on the criterion referenced portion of the state achievement test. The intervention shall occur during the year following the benchmark assessment data. The Department of Education shall assist systems in the identification of effective intervention programs. Evidence of compliance with this requirement shall become a component of the school improvement plan.
    - 3. An assessment of writing in grades five (5) and eight (8).
  - (b) State-mandated student testing programs shall be undertaken in accordance with procedures published by the Department of Education. Local school systems shall develop local policies regarding security of test administration, consistent with Department of Education guidelines.
  - (c) The Department of Education shall annually report to the State Board of Education the number and percentage of students that scored in the below achievement level, but were promoted to the next grade level by the school system. This data shall be disaggregated by subgroups similar to those required for federal reporting.
  - (d) LEAs shall use the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI<sup>2</sup>). RTI<sup>2</sup> shall include high-quality instruction and interventions tailored to student need where core instructional and intervention decisions are guided by student outcome data. Tiered interventions in the areas of reading, mathematics, and/or writing shall occur in general education depending on the needs of the student. If a student fails to respond to intensive interventions and is suspected of having a Specific Learning Disability, then the student may require special education interventions.
- (8) Admission and Enrollment of Students.
  - (a) Children entering kindergarten shall be five (5) years of age on or before August 15. However, a child does not have to enroll in school at five (5) years of age, but enrollment must occur no later than the beginning of the academic year following the child's sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) birthday.

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MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

- (b) Any transfer student applying for admission who was legally enrolled in an approved kindergarten in another state and who will be five (5) years of age no later than December 31 of the current school year, shall be enrolled.
- (c) A child must attend school until his/her eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday, unless:
  - 1. He or she has received a diploma or other certificate of completion of high school;
  - 2. He or she is enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a course of instruction leading to a High School Equivalency Diploma; or
  - 3. He or she is enrolled in a home school and has reached his or her seventeenth (17<sup>th</sup>) birthday.
- (9) Students Transferring From One School to Another.
  - (a) Students may transfer among public schools or among Category I, II, or III private schools (see Chapter 0520-07-02), without loss of credit for completed work. The school which the student leaves must supply a properly certified transcript showing the student's record of attendance, achievement, and the units of credit earned.
  - (b) Principals shall allow credit for work transferred from other schools only when substantiated by official transcripts. Students transferring from schools that are not approved by the State Board of Education or by comparable agencies shall be allowed credit only when they have passed comprehensive written examinations approved, administered, and graded by the principal. Student scores from a recognized standardized test may substitute for the required comprehensive written examinations.
  - (c) The examination administered to students in grades one (1) through eight (8) shall cover only the last grade completed.
  - (d) The examinations administered to students in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) shall cover the individual subjects appearing on the official transcripts. The examination for subjects of more than one (1) unit need cover only the last unit completed. A student transferring from one school to another may count for graduation one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) unit of credit in courses for which a minimum of one (1) unit is required only if the course is not offered in the school to which he or she is transferring.
  - (e) The principal is authorized to transmit transcripts of a student to any school to which the student transfers or applies for admission when the records are requested by the receiving school or institution. The parent or guardian of the student will be notified that the transcript is being sent.
  - (f) Local boards of education may admit pupils from outside their respective local school systems at any time.
  - (g) Local boards of education may arrange for the transfer of students residing within their systems to other school systems by establishing agreements with other local boards of education for the admission or transfer of students from one school system to another.
  - (h) The receiving board of education may set a time before or during the school year after which it will not accept transfer students. The receiving board of education may charge the non-resident student tuition to attend.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

- (i) If a local board of education otherwise permits non-resident students to transfer into its schools, it may not discriminate against any students solely on the grounds of their race, sex, national origin or disability, nor may it charge such students a tuition over and above the usual tuition for non-disabled persons.

(10) Public Virtual Schools.

- (a) Public virtual schools must comply with all applicable State Board of Education policies and rules and regulations.
- (b) Public virtual schools shall:
  - 1. Be approved by the local board of education;
  - 2. Use technology to deliver a significant portion of instruction to its students via the Internet in a virtual or remote setting;
  - 3. Review and provide access to a sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds the curriculum standards adopted by the State Board of Education;
  - 4. Meet the equivalent of the 180 days of instruction and six and one-half (6½) hours per day per academic year pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3004;
  - 5. Monitor participation and progress to ensure students meet participation requirements and make progress toward successful completion of courses;
  - 6. Administer all state tests required of public school students to students enrolled in a virtual school in a proctored environment consistent with state test administration guidelines;
  - 7. Be evaluated annually and report the extent to which the school demonstrates increases in student achievement, along with academic, fiscal, and operational performance;
  - 8. Ensure that students with special needs, including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency are not excluded from enrolling and participating, further, the public virtual school is responsible for providing the services in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP);
  - 9. Ensure that all teachers employed to provide services to the students are endorsed in their grade or course and qualified to teach in Tennessee;
  - 10. Ensure access to instructional materials, access to technology such as a computer and printer that may be necessary for participation in the program, and access to an Internet connection used for school work; and
  - 11. Meet class size standards established by T.C.A. § 49-1-104. An individual virtual school may increase the enrollment in virtual classes by up to twenty-five percent (25%) over the class size standards established by T.C.A. § 49-1-104 if the school demonstrates student achievement growth at a level of "at expectations" or greater, as represented by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) in the prior year.
- (c) Public virtual schools must comply with all compulsory attendance requirements including monitoring and reporting as required in T.C.A. § 49-6-3007.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

1. The district establishing the public virtual school is required to report truancy to the juvenile court having jurisdiction over that student.
2. On or before August 1 of each year, the public virtual school shall notify all LEAs of the enrollment of students residing within the LEA's jurisdiction. LEAs shall be notified within two (2) weeks when changes occur relative to students residing within the LEA's jurisdiction.
3. Once a non-resident student has been accepted by and enrolled in a public virtual school, it shall be the responsibility of the LEA that has established the public virtual school to maintain enrollment of that student until such a time as the student is withdrawn by the parent or guardian. If the student is withdrawn by the parent or guardian, the public virtual school shall send transcripts and other student records to the receiving school in a timely manner.

(11) Records and Reports.

- (a) A cumulative record provided to teachers by local school systems shall be kept up to date for each student, kindergarten (K) through grade twelve (12), and shall remain as local school property.
- (b) Each school shall provide for the storage and safekeeping of all records and reports.
- (c) The maintenance, use, dissemination and confidentiality of information in school records and reports shall be governed by written policies of the local board of education.

(12) School Fees.

- (a) No fees or tuitions shall be required of any student as a condition of attending public schools or using its equipment while receiving educational training. All school fees must be authorized by the local board of education. Local board policy will determine activities during the school day and supplies that are required for participation in courses offered for credit or grade for which the board authorizes the requesting of fees.
- (b) The following school fees may be requested from but not required of any student, regardless of financial status (including eligibility for free or reduced price lunch):
  1. Fees for activities that occur during regular school hours (the required 180 instructional days), including field trips, any portion of which fall within the school day; or for activities outside regular school hours if required for credit or grade;
  2. Fees for activities and supplies required to participate in all courses offered for credit or grade, including interscholastic athletics and marching band if taken for credit in accordance with local board policies; and
  3. Refundable security deposits collected by a school for use of school property for courses offered for credit or grade, including interscholastic athletics and marching band if taken for credit in accordance with local board policies.
- (c) LEAs shall establish a process by which to waive the following school fees for students eligible for free or reduced price school lunches:
  1. Fees or tuition applicable to courses taken for credit or grade during the summer by a student; except that non-resident students regularly enrolled in another

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS      CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

school system may be required to pay fees or tuition for such summer courses; and

2. Fees required for graduation ceremonies.

(d) Fee waiver process for students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. At the beginning of the school year, at the time of enrollment, and/or at the time of requesting school fees, all students and their parents or legal guardians shall be given clear and prominent written notice of authorized fees that may be requested, and notice of the fee waiver process.

1. The parent or legal guardian of a student shall be given the opportunity to pay all or any portion of the school fee if they desire. However, if the parent chooses not to pay a fee, the child may not be prevented from participating in the activity or course for which the fee is being requested.
2. Local education agencies shall provide written notice to parents or legal guardians of approval or denial of requests for fee waivers. Any denial shall contain the specific grounds for denial and shall afford the parent or legal guardian the opportunity for a personal meeting with the appropriate school personnel to discuss the validity of the denial.
3. Local education agencies shall keep copies of any forms, notices and/or instructions used by schools in the waiver of fees and shall keep records of any denials, appeals of denials, and resolution of such appeals.

(e) LEAs are authorized to require payment of the following fees by all affected students:

1. Fines imposed on all students for late-returned library books; parking or other traffic fines imposed for abuse of parking privileges on school property; or reasonable charges for lost or destroyed textbooks, library books, workbooks or any other property of the school;
2. Debts incurred pursuant to paragraph thirteen (13) of this rule, Withholding of Student Grades for Debts Owed to the School;
3. Refundable security deposits collected by a school for use of school property for participation in extracurricular activities;
4. Costs for extracurricular activities occurring outside the regular school day including sports, optional trips, clubs or social events; and
5. Non-resident tuition charged of all students attending a school system other than the one serving their place of residence.

(13) Withholding of Student Grades for Debts Owed to the School.

- (a) Local education agencies are authorized to withhold all grade cards, diplomas, certificates of progress or transcripts of a student who has taken property that belongs to a local education agency, or has incurred a debt to a school, until such student makes restitution in full. Unpaid school fees, as defined above, may not be considered debts owed to the school.
- (b) No student shall be sanctioned under the provisions of this rule when the student is deemed to be without fault for the debt owed to the local education agency or the school.

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MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

- (c) Nothing in this subparagraph authorizes any local education agency to limit the rights of parents to have access to their children's educational records pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- (d) Local education agencies shall afford the student and/or the student's parent the opportunity to appear and be heard if such student and/or the parent disputes the debt, the amount of the debt, or the application of sanctions.

(14) School Board, District School Improvement Planning.

- (a) School Board Improvement Plan. Each local board of education shall develop, maintain, and implement a long-range strategic plan that addresses at least a five (5) year period of time. The plan shall be updated every two (2) years and include a mission statement, goals, objectives and strategies, and address the State Board of Education master plan.
- (b) District and School Improvement Plan. Each local board of education shall have each school under its jurisdiction develop, maintain, and implement a school improvement plan. The plan shall be updated every two (2) years and include areas such as curriculum, instruction, professional development, and community partnerships, and address the long-range strategic plan of the local board of education.

(15) Multi-Hazard Emergency Operations Plans.

- (a) Each local school system shall have a multi-hazard emergency operations plan to include, but not be limited to, fire, tornado, earthquake, flood, bomb threat, and armed intrusion.
- (b) Each school shall practice emergency safety procedures.
- (c) Each local education agency having jurisdiction that lies entirely or partially within one hundred (100) miles of the New Madrid Fault Line shall implement earthquake preparedness drills in each of the schools administered by such local education agency. The Guidebook for Developing a School Earthquake Safety Program published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall serve as the model plan for local education agencies to consider when adopting plans for earthquake preparedness drills. Affected local education agencies shall review and consider the entire guidebook to assure that their schools provide the optimal safety conditions for their students.
- (d) Each school administered by a local education agency having jurisdiction that lies entirely or partially within one hundred (100) miles of the New Madrid Fault Line shall conduct at least two (2) earthquake preparedness drills every school year. A record of the earthquake preparedness drills, including the time and date, shall be kept in the respective schools and shall be made available upon request by the Department of Education.
- (e) Each school that utilizes a two (2)-way communication system shall ensure teachers and other personnel are properly and adequately trained on the use of the system.
- (f) Alternative schools must maintain a two (2)-way communication system.

(16) Automated External Defibrillator.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.03, continued)

- (a) Each public high school shall have an automated external defibrillator (AED) device placed within the school. Each public high school shall comply with the training, notification, and maintenance requirements relative to AEDs in accordance with all provisions of T.C.A. § 68-140-04.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302, 49-1-302(a)(2) and (13), 49-2-110, 49-2-114, 49-6-101, 49-6-201, 49-6-3001(c) and (c)(1), 49-6-3003, 49-6-3005(a) and (a)(4), 49-6-3104, 49-6-3105, 49-6-6201, and Sections 30, 78 through 80, and 88 of Chapter 535 of the Public Acts of 1992. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed April 14, 1980; effective May 28, 1980. Amendment filed July 19, 1982; effective October 13, 1982. Repeal and new rule filed April 18, 1983; effective May 18, 1983. Amendment filed June 10, 1983; effective September 14, 1983. Amendment filed June 27, 1984; effective July 27, 1984. Amendment filed June 28, 1984; effective July 28, 1984. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed July 21, 1992; effective October 28, 1992. Amendment filed September 1, 1992; effective December 29, 1992. Amendment filed October 11, 1995; effective February 28, 1996. Amendment filed April 29, 1996; effective August 28, 1996. Amendment filed May 31, 1996; effective September 27, 1996. Amendment filed May 28, 1999; effective September 28, 1999. Amendment filed August 31, 2001; effective December 28, 2001. Amendment filed March 28, 2002; effective July 29, 2002. Amendment filed June 30, 2003; effective October 28, 2003. Amendment filed March 1, 2005; effective July 29, 2005. Amendment filed September 6, 2007; effective January 28, 2008. Amendment filed April 30, 2009; effective August 28, 2009. Amendment filed October 20, 2009; effective March 31, 2010. Amendment filed March 25, 2010; effective August 29, 2010. Amendment filed December 19, 2012; effective May 30, 2012. Amendments filed March 21, 2012; effective August 29, 2012. Amendment filed February 6, 2013; effective July 29, 2013. Amendment filed May 22, 2015; effective August 20, 2015. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019.

### 0520-01-03-.04 REPEALED.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302, 49-5-5103, and 49-5-5202. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1975; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment filed October 15, 1979; effective January 9, 1980. Amendment filed April 14, 1980; effective May 28, 1980. Amendment filed November 13, 1981; effective December 28, 1981. Amendment filed June 24, 1984; effective July 27, 1984. Amendment filed June 28, 1984; effective July 28, 1984. Amendment filed June 28, 1984; effective September 11, 1984. Amendment filed August 20, 1984; effective November 13, 1984. Amendment filed January 31, 1985; effective April 16, 1985. Amendment filed June 24, 1985; effective September 13, 1985. Amendment filed September 30, 1985; effective December 14, 1985. Amendment filed December 31, 1985; effective March 17, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed July 10, 1986; effective October 29, 1986. Amendment filed October 29, 1986; effective December 13, 1986. Amendment filed October, 15, 1986; effective January 27, 1987. Amendment filed April 24, 1987; effective June 8, 1987. Amendment filed April 18, 1988; effective July 27, 1988. Amendment filed May 13, 1988; effective August 29, 1988. Amendment filed November 22, 1988; effective February 28, 1989. Amendment filed October 31, 1989; effective January 29, 1990. Amendment filed October 12, 1990; effective January 29, 1991. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Repeal filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018.

### 0520-01-03-.05 STATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS.

#### (1) Academic Standards.

- (a) The State Board of Education shall adopt academic standards for each subject area, grades kindergarten (K) through twelve (12). The standards shall specify learning

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MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS      CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

expectations and include performance indicators. The approved standards shall be the basis for planning instructional programs in each local school system.

- (b) Adopted textbooks shall be aligned with state academic standards.
  - (c) Instruction in grades kindergarten (K) through twelve (12) on issues of current concern such as character education, environmental education, economic education, career education, family life education, substance use and abuse, AIDS education, sexual abuse prevention, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and safety shall be incorporated in appropriate subject areas and grade levels.
- (2) Experimental Projects and Special Courses.
- (a) Local school systems may offer special courses not listed in 0520-01-03-.06 that have been approved by the Department of Education. Each course must be approved in advance each year by the Department of Education. Each special course approved by the Department shall be recommended to that state board for an approval period of three (3) or six (6) years.
- (3) Grading and Promotion.
- (a) Each school shall evaluate and report in writing to the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) each student's progress in each subject, at least every nine (9) weeks, in accordance with the school system's evaluation plan. A parent or legal guardian will sign or otherwise acknowledge the report and return it to the teacher. Local school systems may choose not to require parental acknowledgement of the grade report for students in grades seven (7) through twelve (12). If parental acknowledgement is not required, schools must publish annually the dates and method of reporting student progress and must provide ample opportunities for parents to notify the school of any concerns.
  - (b) Local school systems shall develop and implement grading, promotion, and retention policies for grades kindergarten (K) through eight (8). The policies shall be communicated annually to students and parents.
  - (c) Local school systems shall use the state board adopted uniform grading system for students enrolled in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) for reporting student grades for the determination of eligibility for HOPE scholarships.
- (4) Reserved.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 37-1-603, 49-1-204, 49-1-302, 49-1-304, 49-1-404, 49-6-101, 49-6-209(d), 49-6-407, 49-6-1003, 49-6-1005, 49-6-1006, 49-6-1007, 49-6-1008, 49-6-1202, 49-6-1203, 49-6-1204, 49-6-1205, 49-6-1302, 49-6-2202, 49-6-2203, and 49-6-3001(c)(3)(A). **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1975; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed October 3, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed January 17, 1986; effective April 15, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed August 26, 1986; effective November 29, 1986. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed April 28, 1992; effective July 29, 1992. Amendment filed September 1, 1992; effective December 29, 1992. Amendment filed January 21, 1994; effective May 31, 1994. Amendment filed April 29, 1996; effective August 28, 1996. Amendment filed January 14, 1997; effective May 30, 1997. Amendment filed April 27, 1998; effective August 28, 1998. Amendment filed July 13, 1998; effective November 27, 1998. Amendment filed November 18, 1999; effective March 30, 1999. Amendment filed April 28, 2000; effective August 28, 2000. Amendment filed October 31, 2002; effective February 28, 2003. Amendment filed March 31, 2003; effective July 29, 2003. Amendment filed June 30, 2003; effective October 28, 2003. Amendment filed June 30, 2005; effective

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## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

*October 28, 2005. Amendments filed December 28, 2005; effective April 28, 2006. Amendments filed September 6, 2013; effective February 28, 2014. Amendment filed April 6, 2015; effective July 5, 2015. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019.*

### 0520-01-03-.06 GRADUATION.

- (1) Graduation Requirements - All students will have access to a rigorous education that will prepare them for success in postsecondary and the workforce. All coursework should be aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards for that subject and course.

- (a) High School Diploma.

The following twenty-two (22) credits shall be required for graduation:

English language arts	4 credits
Mathematics	4 credits
Science	3 credits
Social Studies	3 credits
Physical Education and Wellness	1.5 credits
Personal Finance	0.5 credit
Elective Focus	3 credits
Foreign Language	2 credits
Fine Arts	1 credit

2. To earn a regular high school diploma, students must: (1) earn the prescribed twenty-two (22)-credit minimum; (2) complete the ACT, SAT, or other eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade assessment as determined by the commissioner of education; and (3) have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline.
3. Students with disabilities will be included in regular classes to the degree possible and with appropriate support and accommodations. To earn a regular high school diploma, students with disabilities must earn the prescribed twenty-two (22)-credit minimum.
4. A special education diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of high school to students with disabilities who: (1) have not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma; (2) have satisfactorily completed an IEP; and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work toward a regular high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.
5. An occupational diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of high school to students with disabilities who: (1) have not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma; (2) have satisfactorily completed an IEP; (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct; (4) have completed the occupational diploma Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEEMA) created by the Department of Education; and (5) have completed two (2) years of paid or non-paid work experience. The determination that an occupational diploma is the goal for a student with a disability will be made at the conclusion of the student's tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) grade year or two (2) academic years prior to the expected graduation date. Students who obtain the occupational

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diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.

6. An alternate academic diploma may be awarded to students with significant cognitive disabilities at the end of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of high school who have: (1) participated in the high school alternate assessments; (2) earned the prescribed twenty-two (22) credit minimum; (3) received special education services or supports and made satisfactory progress on an IEP; (4) satisfactory records of attendance and conduct; and (5) completed a transition assessment(s) that measures, at a minimum, preparedness for postsecondary education and training; employment; independent living; and community involvement. The required credits may be earned either through the state-approved standards or through alternate academic diploma modified course requirements approved by the State Board. A student who earns an alternate academic diploma shall continue to be eligible for special education services under IDEA until he or she receives a regular high school diploma or through the school year in which the student turns twenty-two (22).
7. All full-time students in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) shall be enrolled each semester in subjects that produce a minimum of five (5) units of credit for graduation per year. Students with hardships and gifted students may appeal this requirement to the Director of Schools and then to the local board of education.
8. Students must complete four (4) credits of English, including English I, English II, English III, and English IV.
9. Students must complete four (4) credits of mathematics including, Algebra I and II, Geometry, or the equivalent Integrated Math I, II, and III, and another mathematics course beyond Algebra I or Integrated Math I. Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year. Students who complete any of the required math credits prior to the ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade may receive graduation credit for that coursework; however, those students are still required to enroll in math during each high school year.
10. Students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics as documented in the individualized education program (IEP) shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or the equivalent Integrated Math I and Integrated Math II). The required number of credits in math will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.
11. Students must complete three (3) credits of Science. Students must complete Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and a third lab science. Students with a qualifying disability as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Biology I and two (2) other lab science credits. The required number of credits in science will be achieved through strategies such as, but not limited to, increased time, appropriate methodologies, and accommodations as determined by the IEP team.
12. Students must complete three (3) credits of Social Studies. The content of the social studies courses will be consistent with Tennessee Academic Standards and with admissions requirements of Tennessee public institutions of higher education. Required courses include United States History and Geography, World History and Geography, Economics, and United States Government and Civics.

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13. Students must complete one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) credit in Personal Finance. Three (3) years of JROTC may be substituted for one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) credit of Personal Finance if the JROTC instructor attends the Personal Finance training.

14. Students must complete one (1) credit in wellness. The wellness courses will integrate concepts from health, physical fitness, and wellness and may be taught by a team of teachers from one (1) or more teaching areas, including health, physical education, family and nutrition sciences, and health sciences education.

Participation in marching band and interscholastic athletics may not be substituted for this aspect of the graduation requirements. Credit earned in two (2) years of JROTC may be substituted provided the local system has complied with requirements of the State Board of Education.

Credit for basic training may be substituted, upon the choice of the student, for the required credit in lifetime wellness and credit in one (1) elective course or for credit in two (2) elective courses.

15. Students must complete one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) credit in physical education. This requirement may be met by substituting a documented and equivalent time of physical activity in marching band, JROTC, cheerleading, interscholastic athletics, school sponsored intramural athletics, and other areas approved by the local board of education.

16. Students must complete two (2) credits of the same Foreign Language. The credit requirement for foreign language may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.

17. Students must complete one (1) credit in Fine Arts. The credit requirement for fine arts may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.

18. Students must complete three (3) credits in an elective focus. All students will pursue a focused program of study designed to prepare them for the workforce and postsecondary study. The elective focus may be CTE, science and math, humanities, fine arts, AP/IB, or other areas approved by the local board of education. Students completing a CTE elective focus must complete three (3) credits in the same CTE career cluster or state-approved program of study. The director of schools may waive the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) credit requirement of the elective focus during a student's senior year if the completion of the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) elective focus credit would prevent or delay graduation. This waiver option includes those students who transfer during the junior or senior year to a Tennessee high school from a school in another state or from a non-public school.

19. Every candidate for graduation must have received a full year of computer education at some point during the candidate's educational career pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-1010.

(b) Examinations.

1. End of Course examinations will be given in English I, English II, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, U.S. History, and Biology I. Students are not required to pass any one (1) examination, but instead students must achieve a passing score for the course in accordance with the State Board of Education's Uniform Grading Policy.

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2. The Department of Education shall provide raw score data from the End of Course (EOC) examinations to each local education agency (LEA) for the purpose of including student scores on the EOC examinations into a student's final grade for the course. The weight of the EOC examination on the student's final average shall be determined by the LEA from a range of not less than fifteen percent (15%) and not more than twenty-five percent (25%).

Each LEA must establish a local board policy that details the methodology used and the required weighting for incorporating students' scores on EOC examinations into final report card grades.

Results of individual student performance from all administered EOC examinations will be provided to LEAs in time to facilitate the inclusion of these results as part of the students' grade. If an LEA does not receive its students' EOC examination scores at least (5) instructional days before the scheduled end of the course, then the LEA may choose not to include its students' EOC examination scores in the students' final average.

3. As a strategy for assessing student readiness for postsecondary education, every public school student shall take either the ACT, SAT, or other eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grade assessment as determined by the commissioner.
4. All LEAs shall implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-1028.
5. Students must participate in the United States civics test during the candidate's high school career pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-408.

- (c) Academic Program. All courses listed in State Board of Education Policy 3.205 may be offered for credit in grades nine (9) through twelve (12).
- (d) Every local board of education shall develop a policy regarding the minimum and maximum units in any course or subject area for which a student may earn credit toward graduation.

(2) Testing for Credit.

- (a) Local boards of education may adopt policies permitting students who are enrolled in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) and who have taken the equivalent of high school level courses to earn unit(s) of high school credit for these courses. Students may earn credit toward graduation upon passing a comprehensive written examination in accordance with standards determined by the local board of education.

- (b) High school credit may not be given by examination in American History.

(3) Work-Based Learning Experiences.

- (a) Students will have access to a system of structured Work-Based Learning (WBL) experiences that allows them to apply classroom theories to practical problems and to explore career options.
- (b) The state board's Work-Based Learning Framework will govern all WBL experiences. The Department of Education will provide school systems with a Work-Based Learning Policy Guide and a Work-Based Learning Implementation Guide to address training requirements, program expectations, and legal requirements. These documents will be

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reviewed annually by the Department of Education and will be updated as necessary for dissemination to school systems.

(4) Enrollment in College Level Courses.

- (a) Local education agencies shall award high school credit to students who successfully complete college level courses aligned to a graduation requirement course, including general education and elective focus courses.
- (b) Early admission into college may be considered for a twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) grade student who has at least a 3.5 grade point average and a minimum ACT composite score of twenty-five (25) (or equivalent SAT score). A student must have written endorsement from the high school principal, counseling staff, and the partnering postsecondary institution. The written agreement shall include a review by the principal of the postsecondary coursework and verification that it is appropriate to substitute for any remaining graduation requirements for the student. Written agreements submitted by the student and the parents must be placed on file in the office of the principal.
- (c) A qualified student enrolled in high school may enroll in a postsecondary institution and take college-level courses, which are taught at the high school, postsecondary institution, or online by postsecondary faculty or credentialed adjunct faculty. Students who take and pass dual enrollment courses at a postsecondary institution shall have their postsecondary credits accepted by their local high school for credit as a substitution for an aligned graduation requirement course, including general education and elective focus courses. State funds to the local school system shall not be diminished because of the student's participation.
- (d) Local boards of education may adopt policies providing for college-level courses to be offered during the school day on the high school campus. Such courses must be taught by a licensed high school teacher or credentialed postsecondary faculty member approved by the local school system and partnering postsecondary institution. These courses are to be considered part of the high school program, with content and instruction subject to the supervision of the school principal and local board of education.

(5) The High School Equivalency Testing (HiSET) Program and the Issuance of Equivalency Diplomas.

- (a) The testing program is operated in accordance with the HiSET manual of the Education Testing Service and the rules established by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.
- (b) The chief examiners shall ensure that all examinees meet the state requirements for age, residency, proper identification, and any other qualifications prior to admission to the testing session.
- (c) A candidate must be eighteen (18) years of age before being eligible to take the HiSET test. A seventeen (17) year old may be allowed to take the examination upon recommendation of the local school superintendent. The superintendent may require written documentation from the applicant to support this recommendation. This rule shall not be used to circumvent participation in the regular high school program.
- (d) The HiSET test consists of five (5) core areas that count twenty (20) points each. In order to pass, the total composite score on the HiSET test shall not be less than forty-five (45) and no score on any one (1) core area of the test battery shall be less than eight (8).

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(Rule 0520-01-03-.06, continued)

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302, 49-1-302(a)(2) and (13), 49-6-101, 49-6-201, 49-6-3001(c) and (c)(1), 49-6-3003, 49-6-3005(a) and (a)(4), 49-6-3104, 49-6-3105, 49-6-6001(g), 49-6-6201, and Sections 30, 78 through 80, and 88 of Chapter 535 of the Public Acts of 1992, and Public Chapter 448 (2013).  
**Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed July 18, 1974; effective August 17, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1975; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment filed October 15, 1979; effective January 8, 1980. Amendment filed April 14, 1980; effective May 28, 1980. Amendment filed April 13, 1982; effective May 28, 1982. Amendment filed September 28, 1982; effective December 15, 1982. Amendment filed January 19, 1983; effective April 18, 1983. Amendment filed September 28, 1983; effective December 14, 1983. Amendment filed January 6, 1984; effective April 15, 1984. Amendment filed June 28, 1984; effective July 28, 1984. Amendment filed June 28, 1984; effective September 11, 1984. Amendment filed May 12, 1985; effective August 13, 1985. Amendment filed October 3, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed March 25, 1986; effective June 14, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed July 10, 1987; effective October 28, 1987. Amendment filed July 22, 1987; effective October 28, 1987. Amendment filed September 20, 1987; effective December 29, 1987. Amendment filed November 18, 1987; effective February 28, 1988. Amendment filed April 18, 1988; effective July 27, 1988. Amendment filed May 13, 1988; effective August 29, 1988. Amendment filed October 18, 1988; effective January 29, 1989. Amendment filed November 22, 1988; effective February 28, 1989. Amendment filed November 16, 1989; effective February 28, 1990. Amendment filed June 5, 1990; effective September 26, 1990. Amendment filed October 12, 1990; effective January 29, 1991. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed June 24, 1992; effective September 28, 1992. Amendment filed July 21, 1992; effective October 28, 1992. Amendment filed September 1, 1992; effective December 29, 1992. Amendment filed April 14, 1993; effective July 28, 1993. Amendment filed August 10, 1993; effective December 29, 1993. Amendment filed October 28, 1993; effective March 1, 1994. Amendment filed January 21, 1994; effective May 31, 1994. Amendment filed January 31, 1995; effective May 31, 1995. Amendment filed March 27, 1995; effective July 28, 1995. Amendment filed May 31, 1996; effective September 27, 1996. Amendment filed April 27, 1998; effective August 28, 1998. Amendment filed July 13, 1998; effective November 27, 1998. Amendment filed November 18, 1999; effective March 30, 1999. Amendment filed May 28, 1999; effective September 28, 1999. Amendment filed November 30, 1999; effective March 29, 2000. Amendment filed April 28, 2000; effective August 28, 2000. Amendment filed July 31, 2000; effective November 28, 2000. Amendment filed October 31, 2000; effective February 28, 2001. Amendment filed August 31, 2001; effective December 28, 2001. Amendment filed December 31, 2001; effective April 30, 2002. Amendment filed March 28, 2002; effective July 29, 2002. Amendment filed October 31, 2002; effective February 28, 2003. Amendment filed March 31, 2003; effective July 29, 2003. Amendment filed June 30, 2003; effective October 28, 2003. Amendment filed August 30, 2004; effective December 29, 2004. Amendments filed May 19, 2005; effective September 28, 2005. Amendments filed June 30, 2005; effective October 28, 2005. Amendment filed June 19, 2007; effective October 26, 2007. Amendments filed September 6, 2007; effective January 28, 2008. Repeal and new rule filed June 11, 2008; effective October 28, 2008. Amendment filed July 17, 2009; effective December 29, 2009. Amendment filed February 24, 2010; effective July 29, 2010. Amendment filed February 6, 2013; effective July 29, 2013. Amendment filed June 18, 2013; effective November 28, 2013. Amendments filed September 6, 2013; effective February 28, 2014. Amendments filed October 7, 2013; to be effective March 31, 2014. However, the State Board of Education filed a withdrawal of the rule. Amendments filed November 27, 2013; effective April 30, 2014. Amendment filed May 8, 2014; effective October 29, 2014. Amendment filed October 13, 2015; effective January 11, 2015. Amendment to rule 0520-01-03-.06 (1)(b) filed May 22, 2015; effective August 20, 2015. Amendment to rule 0520-01-03-.06 (3) filed May 22, 2015; effective August 20, 2015. Amendments filed December 30, 2015; effective March 29, 2016. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019.

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**0520-01-03-.07 LIBRARY INFORMATION CENTER.**

- (1) School Library Information Center.
  - (a) All school libraries shall serve as resources for students, teachers, and community members to strengthen student learning. School library information specialists shall work collaboratively with classroom teachers and school administrators to integrate both curricular concepts and information skills that assist research and other learning activities. The collection and the services of the library shall adequately support the curricular priorities within the school.
  - (b) School libraries shall provide an environment that allows efficient access to resources, including both print and electronic. Schools must be organized to allow the library program to operate a flexible schedule that allows students and teachers to access resources at the point of need.
  - (c) School libraries shall provide parents and community members access to resources, so that the school library information center serves as a community resource.
- (2) Library Information Center Personnel.
  - (a) Elementary/Middle Schools. Schools including grades kindergarten (K) through eight (8) or any combination thereof shall provide library information personnel as follows:
    1. A school having a current average daily membership of 550 or more students shall have a full-time library information specialist with endorsement as a library information specialist.
    2. A school with a current average daily membership of 400 to 549 students shall have a half-time library information specialist with endorsement as a library information specialist. During the time that the library is open during regular school hours and the library information specialist is not present, staff member(s) shall be designated to provide supervision to students in the library.
    3. In a school with fewer than 400 students, a faculty member shall serve as a library information coordinator. If the library information coordinator is not present during the time that the library is open during regular school hours, staff member(s) shall be designated to provide supervision to students in the library.
    4. It is optimal to have the library open outside the regularly scheduled school day and if library personnel specialist or coordinator is not present, appropriate supervision shall be provided to the students in the library.
  - (b) High Schools. Schools including any high school grade shall provide library information personnel as follows:
    1. A school with a current average daily membership of 1,500 or more students shall have two (2) full-time library information specialists, each with endorsement as a library information specialist.
    2. A school with a current average daily membership of more than 300 but less than 1,500 students shall have a full-time library information specialist with endorsement as a library information specialist.
    3. A school with a current average daily membership of fewer than 300 students shall have a half-time library information specialist. During the time that the

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library is open during regular school hours and the library information specialist is not present, staff member(s) shall be designated to provide supervision to students in the library.

4. It is optimal to have the library open outside the regularly scheduled school day and if the library information specialist is not present, appropriate supervision shall be provided to the students in the library.

## (3) Library Information Center Collection.

The three (3) levels of collection standards for Tennessee school libraries are: Basic, Standard, and Exemplary. The criteria by which school library collections are evaluated are listed below:

### (a) Item Count.

Basic collection - Contains a minimum of twelve (12) items per student in Average Daily Membership (ADM);

Standard collection - Contains fifteen (15) items per student in ADM; and

Exemplary collection - Contains eighteen (18) items per students in ADM.

### (b) Collection Compilation.

1. Pamphlets, textbooks, class sets, periodicals, out-of-date items, and items in poor physical condition shall neither be counted nor reported in the total collection. No more than five (5) copies of the same print title may be counted to meet standards for a minimum number of items per student.
2. Digital resources should be accessible through a school library webpage or Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and may comprise fifty percent (50%) of the collection.
3. The library shall provide access to the virtual library administered by the Tennessee State Library and Archives and the library personnel should receive training. These resources may count for up to twenty percent (20%) of the overall collection or, in schools in which the librarian has received official training within the last five (5) years, they may count for up to thirty percent (30%) of the overall collection.
4. The collection shall include access to a current, complete encyclopedia in any format. In secondary schools, the collection shall also include an unabridged dictionary, one (1) foreign language dictionary in the native language of ESL students in attendance at the school, a local newspaper, and one (1) daily newspaper presenting news on both state and national levels. For digital materials, only full text should be counted in the total.
5. The collection should include a balance of fiction and nonfiction with an appropriate level of text complexity. The resources in the collection should be chosen to: complement and augment the most recently adopted curriculum standards, be a motivational springboard for student research, and encourage self-expression and curiosity by offering a variety of recreational reading material.

### (c) Age.

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Collections meeting the compilation standards are evaluated based on age of the collection as measured in years from the current year:

Basic collection - sixteen (16) years and older;

Standard collection - fifteen (15) years; and

Exemplary collection - fourteen (14) years or less.

(d) Technology - Access to Digital Materials.

1. Workstations with internet access in the library information center are sufficient to provide access for students. The number of workstations should be no less than the maximum average class size allowable by the state. A workstation may be a desktop, laptop, tablet or similar device, but devices available for checkout should not be counted in the total.
2. School libraries should be equipped with instructional technology, including, but not limited to, LCD projector, screen and/or interactive smart board, document camera, computer, etc., and provide user training for such devices.
3. Separate computers must be maintained for both the library management system/circulation and for the library personnel.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302 and 49-3-305. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1985; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment filed October 15, 1979; effective January 8, 1980. Amendment filed June 27, 1984; effective July 27, 1984. Amendment filed October 1, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed July 22, 1987; effective October 28, 1987. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed March 28, 2002; effective July 29, 2002. Repeal and new rule filed May 16, 2014; effective October 29, 2014. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018.

### 0520-01-03-.08 PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES.

- (1) Each local board of education shall develop standards and policies for:
  - (a) Attendance Services
  - (b) Guidance Services
  - (c) School Psychological Services
  - (d) School Social Work Services
  - (e) School Health Services
- (2) The school health services program shall include but not be limited to the following:
  - (a) Each local school system shall have a written policy providing for a physical examination of every child entering school for the first time. A doctor of medicine, osteopathic physician, physician assistant, certified nurse practitioner, or a properly

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trained public health nurse shall perform this examination. No child shall be admitted to school without proof of immunization except those who are exempt by statute as provided in T.C.A. § 49-6-5001.

- (b) Each local school system shall have a written policy providing for a physical examination of every student participating in interscholastic athletics. A doctor of medicine, osteopathic physician, physician assistant, or certified nurse practitioner shall perform this examination.
- (c) Each local school system shall have a written policy for excluding pupils with communicable diseases and for readmitting them following recovery. In the case of diseases (listed in Regulations Governing Communicable Diseases in Tennessee: Tennessee Department of Health) the policy shall be in accordance with the recommendations of the State Department of Health as approved by the State commissioner.
- (d) Each local school system shall have a written policy for handling drug/alcohol problems that may arise in the schools.
- (e) Each local school system shall develop procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse and neglect as provided in T.C.A. § 37-1-403.
- (f) After an offer of employment has been made to an applicant and prior to the commencement of the employment duties, each employee shall present a physician's certificate showing a satisfactory health record. Employees shall present a certificate thereafter at intervals determined by the State Department of Health and approved by the commissioner. The provisions of this subsection shall be administered in a manner consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C.A. §§ 12101 et. seq) and the associated regulations (29 C.F.R. Chapter XIV, Part 1630 et. seq).
- (g) HIV, HIV-Related Illness, and AIDS.
  - 1. All children with HIV, HIV-related illness, and AIDS infection who enroll in the public school systems of Tennessee shall attend and participate in educational programs appropriate to meet medical and educational needs.
  - 2. Each local school system shall:
    - (i) Develop a comprehensive local AIDS plan that addresses appropriate education programs, confidentiality, liability, personnel, safety, curriculum, education, communications and public relations. The plan will be developed in conjunction with public health officials based upon guidelines approved by the State Board of Education.
    - (ii) Include in the AIDS plan education/training programs for all school personnel, parents, and board members; and cooperate with other community organizations and state agencies in AIDS education for all citizens.
    - (iii) Include in the AIDS plan a policy for personnel with HIV, HIV-related illness and AIDS infection. Employment conditions will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The review of individual cases will involve at a minimum the superintendent or designee, the employee's physician, and a public health official.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.08, continued)

3. Information including names, records, reports, and/or correspondence and any other identifying information on HIV, HIV-related illness and AIDS infection status for any individual child or adult shall be maintained in confidence.
  
4. Local school systems and school personnel shall implement for all children and adults the universal precautions as defined by the State Department of Health for handling blood and other body fluids. Information about universal precautions and related safety procedures shall be distributed by the State Department of Education to all school systems and school personnel in Tennessee.

\* HIV, HIV-related illness and AIDS infection are the three (3) terms used to denote the three (3) medically diagnosed stages of the infection caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus. (AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; ARC - AIDS Related Complex; and HIV Infection - Human Immunodeficiency Virus antibodies detected in blood.)

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302 and 49-1-302(a)(2) and (13). **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed October 3, 1974; effective November 2, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1975; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed January 15, 1976; effective April 15, 1976. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment filed April 14, 1980; effective May 28, 1980. Amendment filed October 1, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed July 10, 1986; effective October 29, 1986. Amendment filed July 22, 1987; effective October 28, 1987. Amendment filed October 18, 1988; effective January 29, 1989. Amendment filed November 16, 1989; effective February 28, 1990. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed October 11, 1995; effective February 28, 1996. Amendment filed April 29, 1996; effective August 28, 1996. Amendment filed November 30, 1999; effective March 29, 2000. Amendment filed April 30, 2001; effective August 28, 2001. Amendment filed April 17, 2006; effective August 28, 2006. Amendment to rule 0520-01-03-.08 filed June 11, 2008; to become effective October 28, 2008; was withdrawn August 4, 2008. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019.

### 0520-01-03-.09 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

See Rule 0520-01-09.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-10-101, et seq. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed June 10, 1974. Amendment filed October 3, 1974; effective November 2, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1975; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed January 15, 1976; effective April 15, 1976. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed February 28, 1978; effective March 30, 1978. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment filed April 14, 1980; effective May 28, 1980. Amendment filed June 27, 1984; effective July 27, 1984. Amendment filed May 12, 1985; effective August 13, 1985. Amendment filed October 1, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed July 10, 1986; effective October 29, 1986. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Repealed and new rule filed August 18 1993; effective December 29, 1993. Amendment filed June 21, 1995; effective October 27, 1995. Amendment filed August 7, 1995; effective December 29, 1995. (For Requirement H, see Chapter 0520-01-09, per Tennessee State Board of Education letter dated April 29, 1999.) Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

**0520-01-03-10 WAIVERS.**

- (1) The commissioner is authorized to grant waivers to a school that does not comply with these rules and regulations only when requested by action of the local board of education.
- (2) For limitation on the commissioner's authority to waive rules and regulations, see T.C.A. §§ 49-1-104 and 49-1-203.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-203 and 49-1-302. **Administrative History:** Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed January 9, 1979; effective February 23, 1979. Amendment filed October 15, 1979; effective January 8, 1980. Amendment filed November 13, 1981; effective March 16, 1982. Amendment filed April 13, 1982; effective May 28, 1982. Amendment filed April 12, 1983; effective May 12, 1983. Amendment filed May 7, 1985; effective June 6, 1985. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed August 26, 1986; effective November 29, 1986. Amendment filed December 30, 1986; effective March 31, 1987. Amendment filed May 21, 1987; effective August 29, 1989. Amendment filed April 18, 1988; effective July 27, 1988. Amendment filed January 23, 1989; effective March 9, 1989. Amendment filed November 16, 1989; effective February 28, 1990. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018.

**0520-01-03-11 REQUIREMENTS FOR 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.**

- (1) A Local Education Agency ("LEA") may request that the Commissioner waive a State Board rule or state statute for one (1) or more of the LEA's schools that inhibits or hinders the LEA's ability to meet the LEA's goals or comply with the LEA's mission due solely to the outbreak of COVID-19 during the spring semester of the 2019-2020 school year. No waiver shall be effective until approved by the State Board. Waiver requests shall be submitted to the Commissioner by June 30, 2020.
- (2) For students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2019-2020 school year, the following shall apply:
  - (a) A student in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2019-20 school year shall receive as their spring semester grade no grade lower than the grade they earned in the course as of March 20, 2020; however, LEAs and public charter schools may provide remote learning opportunities to students as an opportunity to improve the student's grade.
  - (b) LEAs and public charter schools who allow students to complete additional work to improve their spring semester grade should support students who lack home internet access by providing printed materials to complete necessary coursework to obtain a passing grade.
  - (c) LEAs and public charter schools may provide remote credit recovery opportunities for students who failed their first attempt at a course in spring 2020 in order to obtain a passing score.
  - (d) LEAs that have adopted a locally approved grading system may continue to calculate grades and graduation distinctions under a locally approved grading system as determined by the local board of education.
  - (e) In order to graduate in the 2019-20 school year, students must earn a minimum of twenty (20) credit hours which shall include the following subjects:

# Rules of the State Board of Education

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.11, continued)

1. Four (4) credits of mathematics as described in the State Board's High School Policy 2.103;
  2. Four (4) credits of English language arts as described in the State Board's High School Policy 2.103;
  3. Three (3) credits of science as described in the State Board's High School Policy 2.103; and
  4. Two (2) credits of social studies as described in the State Board's High School Policy 2.103.
- (f) A student in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2019-20 school year shall not have End-of-Course exams scheduled to occur in the spring semester of the 2019-20 school year count as a percentage of a student's final grade in a course with an associated End-of-Course exam.
- (g) A student scheduled to graduate in the 2019-20 school year is not required to take and pass the civics test required by T.C.A. § 49-6-408 to meet the social studies course credit requirements to earn a regular high school diploma.
- (h) Students receiving the occupational diploma in the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school year may receive the occupational diploma if they can demonstrate work experience of at least one (1) year.
- (i) Students in the 12th grade during the 2019-20 school year who were enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their 11th grade year and who did not take the ACT or SAT shall not be required to take the ACT or SAT for graduation purposes.
- (3) Students in the 11th grade during the 2019-20 school year shall not be required to take the ACT or SAT to assess post-secondary readiness during the 2019-20 school year.
- (4) Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, shall not be required in the spring of the 2019-20 school year. This does not prohibit an LEA or public charter school from voluntarily administering TCAP tests to students in the 2019-20 school year.
- (5) Students taking courses for high school credit who were not scheduled to graduate in the 2019-20 school year shall receive no grade lower than the grade they earned in the course as of March 20, 2020; however, LEAs and public charter schools may provide remote learning opportunities to students as an opportunity to improve the student's grade.
- (6) LEAs and public charter schools shall not be required to complete required professional development trainings or required safety drills that a school was unable to conduct due to school closures in the spring semester of the 2019-20 school year.
- (7) Student performance and student growth data from the TCAP tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, administered in the 2019-20 school year shall not be used to assign a letter grade to a school, unless the use results in a higher letter grade for the school. Additionally, student performance and student growth data from TCAP tests administered in the 2019-20 school year shall not be used to identify a school as a priority school or to assign a school to the achievement school district.

# Rules of the State Board of Education

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 0520-01-03

(Rule 0520-01-03-.11, continued)

- (8) The Department of Education will not recommend and the State Board will not approve school or LEA performance designations based on performance goals and measures in the 2019-20 school year.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-103 and 49-1-302, Executive Order No. 14 of 2020 (and applicable, subsequent Executive Orders addressing COVID-19 relief), U.S. Department of Education 2020 Waiver of Tennessee Assessment Requirements, and Public Chapter 652 of 2020. **Administrative History:** (For history prior to June, 1992, see pages iii-ix). Repeal filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Emergency rules filed April 16, 2020; effective through October 13, 2020.

**0520-01-03-.12 THROUGH 0520-01-03-.13 REPEALED.**

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-1-103 and 49-1-302. **Administrative History:** (For history prior to June, 1992, see pages iii-ix). Repeal filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992.

# Public Chapter No. 652



**State of Tennessee**

## **PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 652**

### **HOUSE BILL NO. 2818**

By Representatives Lamberth, Gant, White, Hicks, Hazlewood, Moody, Cochran, Byrd, DeBerry, Dunn, Love, Zachary, Cepicky, Ragan, Griffey, Lafferty, Matthew Hill, Curtis Johnson, Halford, Marsh, Todd, Moon, Keisling, Reedy, Van Huss, Howell, Smith, Freeman, Wright, Gloria Johnson, Thompson, Williams, Weaver, Grills, Rudder, Tillis, Holt, Eldridge, Doggett, Calfee, Beck, Potts, Leatherwood, Littleton, Carter, Farmer, Bricken, Baum, Helton, Sherrell, Clemons, Hall, Hurt, Hakeem, Miller, Parkinson, Windle, Jerry Sexton, Hawk, Kumar, Vaughan, Travis, Mitchell, Timothy Hill, Rudd, Holsclaw, Hulsey, Dixie, Hodges, Boyd, Haston, Hardaway, Daniel, Crawford, Ogles, Powell, Lamar, Chism, Sparks, Curcio, Faison, Mr. Speaker Sexton, Ramsey, Russell, Lynn, Powers, Terry

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 2672

By Senators Johnson, Pody, Crowe, Bell, Dickerson, Gresham, Hensley, Kelsey, Massey, Rose, Stevens, Watson, White

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, relative to education.

WHEREAS, on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, severe weather, including tornadoes and straight-line winds, ravaged Middle Tennessee, resulting in multiple fatalities and the destruction of homes, businesses, and schools; and

WHEREAS, two public schools in Wilson County, Stoner Creek Elementary School and West Wilson Middle School, were damaged beyond repair as a result of the severe weather, and three public schools in Davidson County, Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School, Meigs Academic Magnet Middle School, and Lockeland Design Center Elementary were damaged as a result of the severe weather, with severe damage being sustained to Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School and Meigs Academic Magnet Middle School; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Governor Bill Lee issued Executive Order No. 13, declaring a state of disaster and state of emergency in Tennessee to provide relief to victims of the severe weather and tornadoes; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, Governor Bill Lee issued Executive Order No. 14, declaring a state of emergency in Tennessee to facilitate the treatment and containment of COVID-19, an infectious disease that threatens the health and safety of students and staff; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, Governor Bill Lee urged every school district in Tennessee to close as soon as practicable and to remain closed through March 31, 2020, to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the health and safety risks to Tennesseans from COVID-19 are not yet fully understood and may necessitate school closures beyond March 31, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly seeks to ensure that school districts, schools, teachers, and students are held harmless from testing requirements and accountability measures to provide some relief to Tennesseans during these difficult and uncertain times; now, therefore,

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:**

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 60, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, shall not be required in the spring

# Public Chapter No. 652

**HB 2818**

of the 2019-2020 school year. This section does not prohibit an LEA or school from voluntarily administering TCAP tests to students in the 2019-2020 school year.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-1-302(d)(2), is amended by adding the following as new subdivisions:

(F) Notwithstanding subdivisions (d)(2)(B)(ii) and (iii), for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 school years, student growth evaluation composites generated by assessments administered in the 2019-2020 school year shall be excluded from the student growth measure of a teacher's evaluation, as specified in subdivision (d)(2)(B)(ii), unless including the composites results in a higher evaluation score for the teacher.

(G) Notwithstanding subdivision (d)(2)(B)(ix), the state shall not require teachers in non-tested grades and subjects to be evaluated using an alternative growth model for the 2019-2020 school year. This subdivision (d)(2)(G) does not prohibit an LEA from evaluating teachers in non-tested grades and subjects using an alternative growth model for the 2019-2020 school year. If an LEA chooses to evaluate its teachers in non-tested grades and subjects using an alternative growth model for the 2019-2020 school year, then a teacher's evaluation score using the alternative growth model shall only be used to evaluate the teacher if such use results in a higher evaluation score for the teacher.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-105, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

(h)

(1) Notwithstanding subsection (e) or § 49-1-302(d)(2)(B)(ix), the state shall not require pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers employed in an LEA that receives pre-kindergarten program approval under §§ 49-6-103 - 49-6-110 to be evaluated using the pre-k/kindergarten growth portfolio model approved by the state board of education, or a comparable alternative measure of student growth approved by the state board of education and adopted by the LEA, for the 2019-2020 school year.

(2) This subsection (h) does not prohibit an LEA from evaluating pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers using the pre-k/kindergarten growth portfolio model approved by the state board of education, or a comparable alternative measure of student growth approved by the state board of education and adopted by the LEA, for the 2019-2020 school year.

(3) If an LEA chooses to evaluate its pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers, for the 2019-2020 school year, using the pre-k/kindergarten growth portfolio model approved by the state board of education, or a comparable alternative measure of student growth approved by the state board of education and adopted by the LEA, then a teacher's evaluation score using the pre-k/kindergarten growth portfolio model approved by the state board of education, or a comparable alternative measure of student growth approved by the state board of education and adopted by the LEA, shall only be used to evaluate the teacher if such use results in a higher evaluation score for the teacher.

SECTION 4. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-1-617, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (a), scores on Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, administered in the 2019-2020 school year shall not comprise a percentage of a student's final grade for the spring semester in the subject areas of mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies, unless including TCAP test scores results in a higher final grade for the student.

SECTION 5. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-1-228, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

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**HB 2818**

(f) Notwithstanding subsections (a)-(c), student performance and student growth data from the Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, administered in the 2019-2020 school year shall not be used to assign a letter grade to a school, unless the use results in a higher letter grade for the school.

SECTION 6. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-1-602(a), is amended by adding the following as a new subdivision:

(5) Notwithstanding any provision of this part to the contrary, student performance and student growth data from Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, administered in the 2019-2020 school year shall not be used to identify a school as a priority school or to assign a school to the achievement school district.

SECTION 7. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-408, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

(g) Notwithstanding subsection (f), for the 2019-2020 school year, a student is not required to take and pass the civics test required in this section to meet the social studies course credit requirements to earn a full diploma upon graduation from high school.

SECTION 8. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-3004(a)(6), is amended by designating the existing language as subdivision (A) and adding the following as a new subdivision (B):

(B) Notwithstanding subdivisions (a)(1) and (a)(6)(A), the commissioner of education shall waive the requirement under subdivision (a)(1) of one hundred eighty (180) days of classroom instruction for the 2019-2020 school year. This subdivision (a)(6)(B) does not prohibit a school from continuing classroom instruction after being issued a waiver from the commissioner pursuant to this subdivision (a)(6)(B).

SECTION 9. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-3-317(a), is amended by designating the existing language as subdivision (1) and adding the following as a new subdivision (2):

(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (a)(1), the suspension of the operation of schools in an LEA during the 2019-2020 school year shall not operate to deprive the LEA of state funds to which the LEA would be entitled if the LEA otherwise meets the requirements of law. This subdivision (a)(2) does not require an LEA to petition the state board of education for a determination of an epidemic, natural disaster, or for other justifiable cause before an LEA may receive state funds under this part. For purposes of this subdivision (a)(2), justifiable cause exists for the 2019-2020 school year.

SECTION 10. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-6001, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

(l) Notwithstanding subsection (b), for the 2019-2020 school year, public school students are not required to take an examination at grade eleven (11) to assess student readiness for postsecondary education.

SECTION 11. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-6012, is amended by deleting the section and substituting instead the following:

(a) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, no adverse action may be taken against any student, teacher, school, or LEA based, in whole or in part, on student achievement, student performance, or student growth data generated from:

(1) The 2017-2018 TNReady assessments; or

# Public Chapter No. 652

**HB 2818**

(2) The Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) tests, which include, but are not limited to, TNReady assessments, English learner assessments, alternate TCAP assessments, and end-of-course examinations, administered in the 2019-2020 school year.

(b) As used in this section, "adverse action" includes, but is not limited to, employment termination decisions, adverse compensation decisions, the identification of a school as a priority school, the assignment of a school to the achievement school district, or an action taken in violation of § 49-1-228(f) or § 49-1-617(d).

SECTION 12. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 3, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

(a) Notwithstanding § 49-1-201(d), upon application by an LEA for one (1) or more of the LEA's schools, and upon the approval of the state board of education, the commissioner of education shall waive a state board rule or statute that inhibits or hinders the LEA's ability to meet the LEA's goals or comply with the LEA's mission due solely to the outbreak of COVID-19 during the spring semester of the 2019-2020 school year.

(b) The commissioner shall not waive Section 1 of this act, § 49-1-302(d)(2)(F)-(G), § 49-6-105(h), § 49-1-617(d), § 49-1-228(f), § 49-1-602(a)(5), § 49-6-408(g), § 49-6-3004(a)(6)(B), § 49-3-317(a)(2), § 49-6-6001(l), § 49-6-6012, or any of the emergency rules promulgated by the state board of education to effectuate this act.

(c)

(1) The commissioner shall submit a report to the education committees of the senate and the house of representatives no later than February 28, 2021, on the implementation and use of this section.

(2) The report required under subdivision (c)(1) must identify the substance of each waiver request submitted to the commissioner; whether the LEA's request for a waiver was approved by the state board of education; and the effect of the waiver on the receiving LEA.

(3) The chairs of the education committees of the senate and the house of representatives may request interim reports from the commissioner on the implementation and use of this section before February 28, 2021.

(d) This section is repealed on March 1, 2021.

SECTION 13.

(a) The department of education shall promptly seek a waiver from the United States Department of Education, or seek to amend Tennessee's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan, as necessary and appropriate to implement this act.

(b) The state board of education shall promptly revise the high school graduation requirements for the 2019-2020 school year to ensure that high school seniors who were affected by school closures during the spring of the 2019-2020 school year do not fail to receive a high school diploma for which the student was on-track and otherwise eligible to receive on or before the effective date of this act.

(c) The state board of education shall consult with the department of education, Tennessee higher education commission, and public institutions of higher education to develop guidance, resources, and opportunities for high school students who were enrolled in dual credit or dual enrollment courses during the spring of the 2019-2020 school year, and who were adversely affected by school closures due to COVID-19.

(d) Notwithstanding Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-5-208(a):

(1) The state board of education may promulgate emergency rules as necessary to address any issues created by school closures due to the outbreak

## Public Chapter No. 652

**HB 2818**

of COVID-19 during the 2019-2020 school year. The rules must be promulgated according to the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, compiled in title 4, chapter 5; and

(2) The Tennessee student assistance corporation and public institutions of higher education may promulgate emergency rules to protect the financial aid and credit opportunities for high school students who were enrolled in dual credit or dual enrollment courses during the spring of the 2019-2020 school year, and who were adversely affected by school closures due to COVID-19.

SECTION 14. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.

## Public Chapter No. 652

HOUSE BILL NO. 2818

PASSED: March 19, 2020



CAMERON SEXTON, SPEAKER  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Randy McNally  
RANDY MCNALLY  
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of April 2020



Bill Lee  
BILL LEE, GOVERNOR

# School Ratings



## How do the school ratings work?

The Tennessee Department of Education has provided data about schools and districts on its state report card for many years. Since 2018, to conform to new requirements by federal law, we have been providing more information about schools' performance.

To make sure all community members understand how their school is doing on a variety of metrics that encompass student success, we have worked with families, educators, school and district leaders, community organizations, and state leaders in previous years to identify a rating system that provides helpful and well-rounded context. Since 2018, the department has been using a numerical system to provide a rating on up to six metrics for each school.

Each of the metrics or indicators on the report card are presented like a dashboard. Just like the dashboard in a car, each indicator looks at a different aspect of a school, and users can decide that indicator's importance to them. A school receives a rating on each indicator ranging from 0.0 to 4.0, like a GPA scale, with 4.0 being the highest. Additional information underlies each rating, and the department encourages users to click through and learn more. The six indicators are:

- **Academic achievement** (whether students are performing at or above grade level or whether the school improved from year to year)
- **Student academic growth** (whether students are making progress from year to year)
- **Chronically out of school** (whether students are absent more than 10% of the year)
- **Progress on English language proficiency** (whether English learners are making progress in their understanding of the English language)
- **Ready graduate** (whether students are prepared for postsecondary education or career paths after they leave high school)
- **Graduation rate** (percentage of students graduating from high school on time)

### How were schools rated in 2018-19?

- **Academic achievement:** 61% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Student growth:** 49% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Chronically out of school:** 83% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **English language proficiency:** 61% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Ready graduate:** 74% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Graduation rate:** 84% of schools earned higher than a 2.0

When possible, ratings are based either on **how well the school is doing** on that metric OR **how much the school improved** in the past year. The school gets the higher rating between the two. Every school can earn a high score on each indicator, either by showing excellent performance or by showing exceptional improvement.

The rating system also reflects the belief that every student's success matters. Within each indicator, the performance of the full student population is weighted at 60% of the rating, and the performance of students who are part of a student group – black, Hispanic, or Native American students, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities – is 40%. Ratings for each group are on the indicator's page.

The information and ratings on the report card are intended to be a catalyst for conversation, not a defining characteristic. Ultimately, a quality education is more than a score, and these ratings provide one perspective on how a school is performing. If you have questions or want to learn more about a specific school, we encourage you to reach out to the principal or district leader.

## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



**ACADEMICS**

—

ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE

**EDUCATORS**

—

TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER

**BEST FOR ALL**

We will set all students on a path to success.

**WHOLE CHILD**

—

TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

TN Department of Education

## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card

### Overview of the Tennessee Report Card: what are the Indicators?



Progress on  
English Proficiency



Chronically  
Out of School



Growth



Academic  
Achievement



Additional for  
High Schools



Ready  
Graduate



Graduation  
Rate

Each school is evaluated on 4 (6 for High Schools) different aspects of student success:  
Each of these indicator's score ranges from **0** to **4**.



## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card

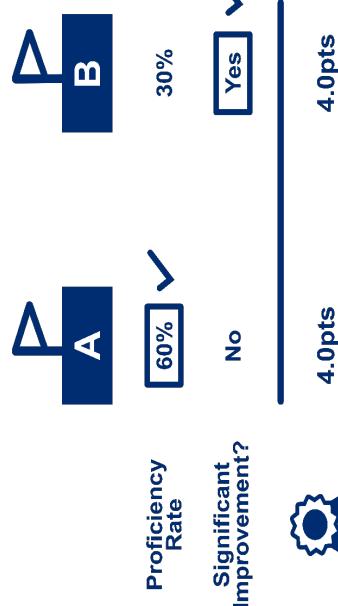
### Absolute Performance vs. Improvement Relative to Annual Goal

① Absolute Performance      ② Improvement Relative to Annual Goal



When calculating the score for each indicator, the State calculates 2 scores, looking at 2 different aspects:

- 1) Absolute performance of the school in a given year
  - 2) Improvement Relative to Annual Goal (set based on previous year's performance)
- Final score is based on the higher of the 2 scores\*\*



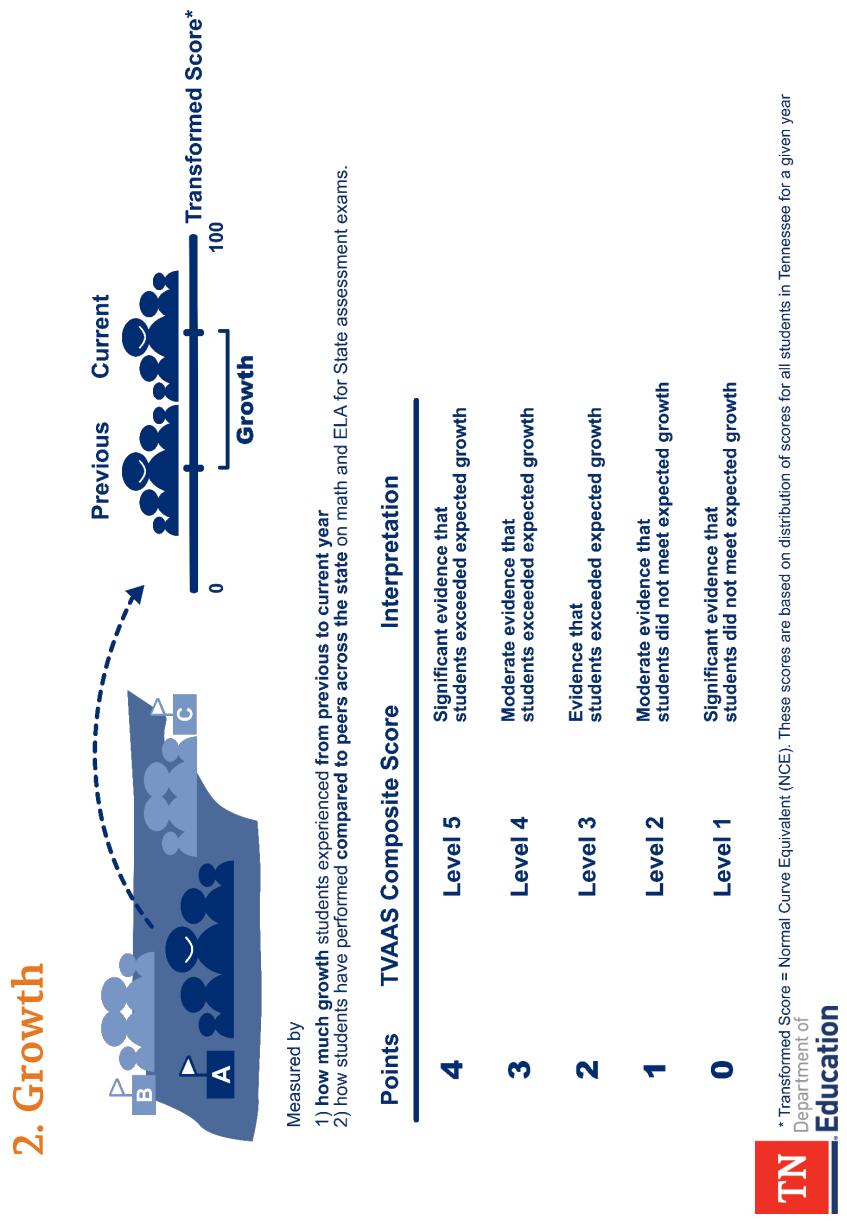
This means that two schools with the same score are not necessarily the same in terms of student success.  
We therefore strongly encourage parents to explore data underlying the indicator score to learn more.

\*\* This only applies to metrics other than: Growth and Progress on English Proficiency

## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



### 3. Chronically Out of School



Measured by % of chronically absent students. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10% (approx. 18 days) of the school instructional days.

Points	K8 School Absolute Performance	High School Absolute Performance	<b>OR</b>	Improvement	
				≤ 10%	≤ Double Annual Goal*
<b>4</b>	<b>≤ 6%</b>				
<b>3</b>	<b>6.1 – 9%</b>	<b>10.1 – 14%</b>		<b>≤ Annual Goal*</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>9.1 – 13%</b>	<b>14.1 – 20%</b>			<b>≤ Annual Goal*</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>13.1 – 20%</b>	<b>20.1 – 30%</b>		<b>Estimate for current year &lt;</b>	<b>Previous year's COS</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>&gt; 20%</b>	<b>&gt; 30%</b>		<b>≥ Previous year's COS</b>	

\* Annual Goal = Target to be reached in order to cut the number of chronically-out-of-school students by half in 8 years

\* Double Annual Goal = Target to be reached in order to cut the number of chronically-out-of-school students by half in 4 years

\*\* Estimate for current year = Lower bound of current year's % of chronically absent students confidence interval

## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



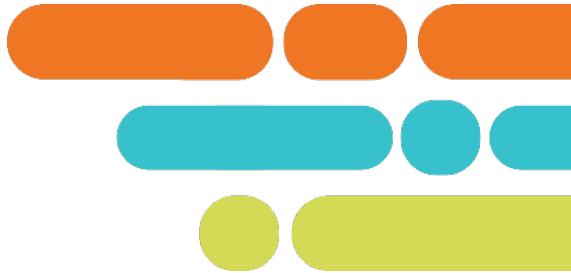
### 4. Progress on English Proficiency



Measured by the % of students meeting the growth standard on the English Language Proficiency Assessment. Each student's growth standard depends on his/her performance in the previous year.

Prior Score Range	Growth Standard	Points	% of students meeting growth standard
1.0 - 1.4	1.3	4	$\geq 60\%$
1.5 - 1.9	0.7	3	50 - 59.9%
2.0 - 2.4	0.8	2	40 - 49.9%
2.5 - 2.9	0.7	1	25 - 39.9%
3.0 - 3.4	0.4	0	< 25%
3.5 - 3.9	0.5		
4.0 - 4.4	0.4		
4.5 - 4.9	0.2		

## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



### 5. Ready Graduate

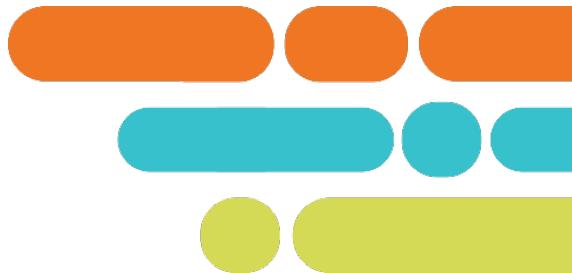


Measured by % of students who graduated on time and met at least one of the Ready Graduate requirements, such as:

② Career Ready			
Points	Absolute Performance	OR	Improvement
<b>4</b>	$\geq 40\%$	$\geq$ Double Annual Goal*	
<b>3</b>	$30 - 39.9\%$	$\geq$ Annual Goal*	
<b>2</b>	$25 - 29.9\%$	$\geq$ Annual Goal*	
<b>1</b>	$16 - 24.9\%$	Estimate for current year	$>$ Previous year's % of Ready Graduates
<b>0</b>	$< 16\%$		$\leq$ Previous year's % of Ready Graduates <b>OR</b> ACT/SAT Participation < 95%

\* Annual Goal = Target to be reached in order to cut the number of non-Ready Graduate students by half in 8 years  
\*\* Double Annual Goal = Target to be reached in order to cut the number of non-Ready Graduate students by half in 4 years  
\*\* Estimate for current year = Upper bound of current year's % of Ready Graduate students confidence interval

## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



### 6. Graduation



Measured by % of students who graduated on time (i.e., within 4 years + summer) with a regular high school diploma

Points	Absolute Performance	OR	Improvement
4	≥ 95%		≥ Double Annual Goal*
3	90 – 94.9%		≥ Annual Goal*
2	80 – 89.9%		≥ Annual Goal*
1	67 – 79.9%	Estimate for current year**	> Previous year's graduation rate
0	< 67%		≤ Previous year's graduation rate

\* Annual Goal = Target to be reached in order to cut the number of students without a high school diploma by half in 8 years.

\* Double Annual Goal = Target to be reached in order to cut the number of students without a high school diploma by half in 4 years

\*\* Estimate for current year = Upper bound of current year's graduation rate confidence interval

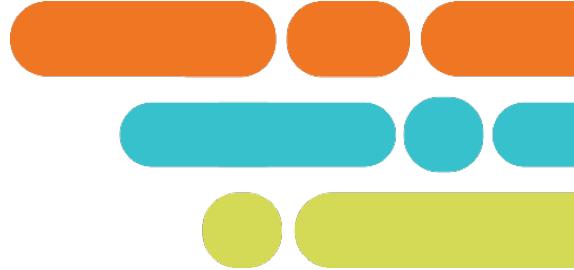


## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card

### Reflecting Success of ALL Students: All Students vs. Student Groups



Group	All Students	Student Groups
Weight	60%	40%
Indicator Score	4.0	2.7
<b>Final Score</b>	<b><math>4.0 \times 0.6 + 2.7 \times 0.4 = 3.5</math></b>	



To better reflect the performance of **ALL** students, the final indicator score is calculated by considering both scores calculated for all students (weight of 60%) and students of historically underserved groups (weight of 40%).

\* BHN = Black, Hispanic, & Native American Students  
ED = Economically Disadvantaged Students  
EL = English learners  
SWD = Students with Disabilities

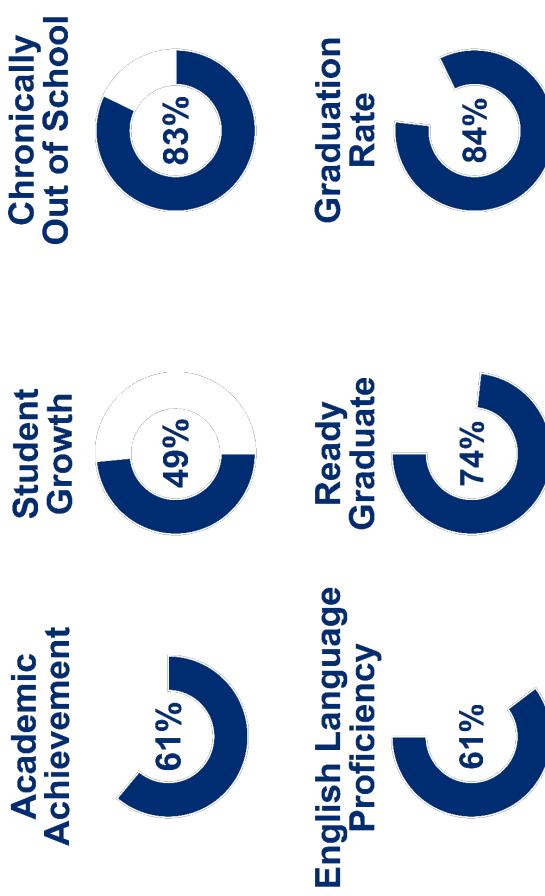


## Visual Summary of 2018-2019 Report Card



### What Ratings did schools receive in 2018-19?

For each indicator, the following % of schools earned ratings higher than 2.0



## Sources of Publicly Available Data in Tennessee

- TSBA District Data Dashboard (Tennessee School Boards Association)
  - Provides district and regional labor market statistics, along with district demographics, academic, and financial data.
  - **Web Address:** <http://tsbadatadashboard.com/>
- County Profiles (Tennessee Higher Education Commission)
  - Provides an overview of higher education data by county, including college-going rate, socioeconomic profile, FAFSA filing rate, top colleges by attendance for high school graduates, etc.
  - **Web Address:** <https://www.tn.gov/thechbureaus/planning-and-research/county-profiles.html>
- Tennessee Educator Survey (Tennessee Education Research Alliance, Tennessee Department of Education)
  - Serves as the largest-scale data collection on Tennessee teacher perspectives on a range of topics, including school climate and leadership, instructional practice, teacher evaluation and instructional improvement, and standards and assessment. Includes district- and school-level data where the response rate is at least 45 percent.
  - **Web Address:** <http://educatorsurvey.tnk12.gov/>
- Tennessee State Report Card (Tennessee Department of Education)
  - Features extensive information about the growth and achievement of Tennessee schools and districts. The report card also includes financial, enrollment, and demographic information.
  - **Web Address:** <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/report-card.html>
- Data Downloads (Tennessee Department of Education)
  - Serves as a landing page for multiple sources of raw data from the Tennessee Department of Education, including data on such topics as achievement, growth, discipline, chronic absenteeism. For the first time last year, the department released Educator Race and Ethnicity Data on this page.
  - **Web Address:** <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/data-downloads.html>
- Tennessee Educator Preparation Report Card (Tennessee State Board of Education, Tennessee Department of Education)
  - Provides data on the effectiveness of educator preparation providers.
  - **Web Address:** <https://teacherprepreportcard.tn.gov/>



## Chapter 6

*Advocating the Board's Vision and  
Strategic Plan*



## The Art of Advocacy

### The Advocacy Role of the Board: an Overview

Advocacy is defined as the act of speaking or writing in support of something. To be an advocate, one must be in favor of and support a particular position, cause, or belief. School board members must be advocates of children, and they must advocate public education, lifelong learning, equality in education, and parental involvement.

At all times they must focus on what's best for children.

Citizens want school boards to be aggressive advocates for children and youth, as well as watchdogs of the public purse. School boards are the only publicly-designated stewards at the local level for the education of children and youth. They are charged with the educational welfare of all students, irrespective of age, sex, race, ethnicity, or ability to learn.

In their advocacy roles, school boards should recognize the essential link between educational excellence and the economic and social health of communities. They should make advocacy a stated goal with appropriate policies for board actions. They should be the catalyst for community discussion and action on issues that affect the welfare of children and youth.

Whether you're talking about raising student achievement, spending local tax dollars wisely, or ensuring that children are educated with a nod to community values, the importance of local school control is all too clear. It doesn't hurt school board members to speak out more forcefully about this reality. Local control ensures that the community has a say in spending tax dollars, selecting curricula, and meeting the needs of the region.

Local decision-making also means more accountability. Unlike state and federal policymakers who legislate mandates from afar, local school board members are very accessible...you're questioned at school events, on the ball field, in your houses of worship, and definitely in the supermarket...Everyone knows your telephone number, and they know where you live. You can't get more accessible than that.

It's also important to remember that local school boards are unique in that their mission is solely devoted to student learning. State legislators, municipal mayors, and other elected officials can seek a greater stake in education decision-making, but school boards are unique because education is not just a line item in the budget. It is the only item. We are unique in that we are single-minded and single-focused...we are the voice of public education.

That voice is particularly important when it comes to advocating the Board's vision and strategic plan. To effectively advocate boards must develop county commission/city council support; influence legislators and congressmen; work with the media; generate public support; and turn employees into advocates

# Developing County Commission/City Council Support

## Building a Relationship with the Commission/Council

All city and county school systems in Tennessee are fiscally dependent, meaning that another body must approve their budgets. These bodies which control the funding for local boards of education are county commissions or city councils. They must determine the taxes needed to fund all services provided by the county or city, including education, police and fire protection, and streets. As elected officials, school board members can have a major impact with these other locally-elected officials.

The following are some do's and don'ts that a board of education and its superintendent can use in dealing with its funding body.

### Do:

1. Take the initiative to establish personal relationships with other locally-elected officials.
2. Establish personal relationships with aides and office personnel of other locally elected officials.
3. Invite local officials to a special tour of the school system and to attend school board meetings and other educational forums.
4. Avoid confrontations. Be friendly even if you disagree. Be polite but firm.
5. Be involved in the REAL MEETINGS.
6. SMILE – keep your sense of humor.
7. Make appropriate items personal for commissioners (anything that affects their districts).
8. Know the magic numbers – TIMING.
9. Have key commissioners ready for motions and opinions.
10. Involve them in the strategic planning.

11. Keep close and keep them informed.
12. Schedule individual time with each commissioner.
13. Listen – you must help meet their needs before you can get what your school system needs.
14. Be flexible and plan for rejections – no is not forever.
15. Negotiate for future funding – announce publicly.
16. Be a gracious winner or loser.

### Don't

1. Think that only you have good ideas or that your way is the only way.
2. Let your pride or ego hurt your school system.
3. Feel you must win each debate - be on equal ground.
4. Win a battle that will cost you the war.
5. Ask for a vote on something you know you won't get – negotiate a future vote.
6. Ride a dead horse or fight a battle you can't win.
7. Publicly criticize individuals on the funding body – state your need and that the funding body is not presently ready to fund this and the repercussion.
8. Demand funding – your county may not be ready or able.
9. Close the door.
10. Let items affecting a commissioner personally or his district go unidentified.
11. Be extravagant.

## From the Horse's Mouth

A former school board member/county commissioner in Tennessee has the following advice for school board members:

1. Accept the fact that relationships do not just happen.
2. Bad relationships are easily achieved, but good relationships come from hard work.
3. Good relationships can disappear without notice.
4. Remember that commissioners are, in fact, real people.
5. Be willing to share complete, accurate information on all issues.
6. To the greatest extent possible, involve commissioners in the decision-making process.
7. Realize that the commissioner's responsibility for funding covers all agencies of government, not just schools.
8. Talk with commissioners often, and listen with both ears and eyes.
9. Positive reinforcement gains a lot.
10. Encourage commissioners to spend time in the school buildings - even teach a class.
11. Remember the three most important things in relationship building:

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.

## Keep Roles and Responsibilities Understood and Respected

1. Don't underestimate, oversimplify or over generalize.
2. Understand county/city finances: debt service, fund distribution, etc.

## Keep the Commission Informed

1. Keep local officials up-to-date with school board activities by sending them copies of board minutes, school system publications, and strategic plan.
2. The line of communication must be kept open with the funding body. (It's up to you to open the door.)
3. Share research findings that may pertain to other agencies.
4. Involve local officials in the school system's strategic and long-range planning efforts.

## Earn the Support of the Commission

1. Let them share in success.
2. Be honest and truthful.
3. Don't send mixed messages.
4. Thank them publicly for increased support.

## Influencing the Legislature to Act for Children

Because in Nashville decisions are made that impact school systems across the state for years to come, advocacy for public education is a critical part of the responsibility of every school board member. Legislators must depend more and more on information from knowledgeable sources in various fields. In education, school board members must be the source of information if local control of schools is to continue.

School board members have firsthand understanding of what is needed to ensure the best education for children. They have an important message to deliver, and they have credibility with other elected officials. Therefore, school board members must learn the tactics of politics and lobbying if they are going to be successful advocates.

### Taking Board Positions

In presenting your board's position on legislative matters, consider these central messages:

1. Schools have changed. Many things that legislators say people want, are already happening.
2. The accountability process is working. Parents are involved. Goals are being set and met. Progress is being assessed.
3. Inadequate funding leads to inadequate facilities and programs. We take visitors to our newest and best buildings and show off our most glitzy programs and equipment. While the successes need to be shown, so do the problems: the things we want to change but can't because of financial incapacity.
4. Board members strongly support local control and know they represent the electorate.
5. Anywhere from 80 to 85% of a school system's budget is tied to salary and benefits which is controlled by mandates and negotiations.

6. TSBA provides a representative on Capitol Hill to support the position statements and legislative priorities of its members. If you or your board has questions or concerns about a TSBA position statement, please contact the TSBA Director of Government Relations. Many times a simple phone call can clear up any confusion or discrepancies.

### Individualizing the Message to Legislators

**1. Know the legislator.** A school board member can be most effective as a legislative advocate by getting to know the legislators from his or her home district on a personal basis. Before a legislative session begins, school boards should meet with legislators to discuss education legislation. These personal contacts can help establish the school board members in each legislator's district as the key resource for educational management information. Make it easy for your legislators to do their job by making yourself an accurate and credible source of information. Know the whole issue, who it affects, how others feel about it, and what impact it will make in the future, both in your school district and statewide.

**2. Know the legislation.** A legislator's time is extremely limited. Before you approach a legislator, know the issue and have facts available to support your position. Do your homework. Get right to the core of the issue when you talk to your legislator and present your information clearly and concisely. Explain what you want and why. Then, offer to answer any questions the legislator may have or to find answers you don't have at hand.

3. **Know the legislative process.** Understanding the steps a bill goes through to become a law is critical in your advocacy efforts. Your input can be valuable at many times – when bills are originated, during committee consideration, during floor consideration, during conference committee consideration, and during the governor's consideration. Your input can be helpful at any point in the process, but be careful to target your efforts to the right person at the right time.
4. **Be firm, but friendly.** You should never force a commitment from a legislator on how he is going to vote. However, once he is aware of your position and the issue, it is never too early to begin asking for his commitment. Remember to always be courteous to your legislator. Respect time limitations. Try to make your contact on Monday or Friday, rather than on the weekend. (In Tennessee, the Legislature meets Monday evening through Thursday.) Don't contact public officials only when you need their help. Make a real effort to keep in touch with them throughout the year – every year.
5. **Attack the issue, not the person involved.** It isn't always possible to remain in harmony with your legislator, but making threats, presenting unfounded allegations, or publicly expressing indignation will get you nowhere. Don't feel that you must be idle when you disagree with an issue. Be certain to make it understood that you are opposed to the issue, not the people involved with the issue.
6. **Don't underestimate public officials.** With very rare exceptions, they will be honest, intelligent, and want to do the right thing. Your job is to keep them informed about what you think is right.
7. **Don't look down on government and politics.** A disdainful attitude will not win over anyone.
8. **Be understanding.** Put yourself in the place of the public official. Try to understand their problems, their outlooks, and aims. Then, you are more likely to be successful in persuading them to understand your concerns.
9. **Be thoughtful.** Commend the good things that public officials do. As school board members, you know public officials get dozens of letters asking them to do something but very few letters of thanks when they do what is asked.
10. **Don't blame public officials for "failing" to do what you wanted.** The failure may be yours if you have not done a good job of preparing, presenting, and following through on your case. Remember you will need their support on other issues.
11. **Avoid selfish requests for special favors and exemptions.** If it becomes absolutely necessary to ask for them, state the reasons frankly.
12. **Be cooperative.** If a public official makes a reasonable request, try to comply with it. Don't back away for fear that it's "a deal."
13. **Be realistic.** Remember that controversial legislation and regulations usually result in compromise. This practice has always been true in a democracy and always will be.
14. **Be practical.** Recognize that each legislator has commitments. Don't chastise a legislator who normally supports you when he or she happens to vote against one of your bills. This vote doesn't necessarily mean the legislator has deserted your whole program. Give them the benefit of the doubt. They will appreciate it and remember you for it. Keep in mind that while some votes are firmly committed, there will be many others that can be swayed on the basis of sound arguments.
15. **Never break a promise.** If you tell a public official you will do something in exchange for a certain action, stick to the bargain.

**16. Don't change horses in the middle of the stream.** Never leave officials stranded out on a limb by changing your policy or position after they have publicly stated a position you have urged them to take.

**17. Learn to evaluate and weigh the issues.** Many bills that are tossed into the hopper "by request" are never intended to become law. Don't criticize legislators for the bills introduced, and don't call out the "army" until you are sure the bill is a serious one.

**18. Remember these don'ts:**

- a. Don't be repetitious in your statements by duplicating material from others.
- b. Don't assume your legislator has read materials that you previously sent.
- c. Don't distort information.
- d. Don't be evasive or antagonistic.
- e. Don't argue.
- f. Don't get sidetracked.
- g. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know.
- h. Don't give up.
- i. Don't overdo it.

**Remember these do's.**

- a. Refer to bills by the official number.
- b. Know the status of bills in both houses of the legislature.
- c. Provide information about how the proposed legislation will affect his or her district.
- d. Have all relevant costs available.
- e. Present any relevant past experience.
- f. Use demonstration materials, such as charts, to make your points effective.
- g. Get to know your legislator's staff.

**Advocating By Visit**

1. Call ahead of time and state your position and schedule a meeting.
2. Notify TSBA's government relations staff of your scheduled meeting. TSBA will provide you with relevant and useful information.
3. Let the legislator know if you are working with others on the issue, or if you are representing your school board.
4. It is best to visit with legislators in a small group – three is optimum – and to keep the visit as brief as possible. One person should be the main spokesperson.
5. Be prepared to state your position and supporting facts quickly. Most meetings with legislators last less than 15 minutes.
6. A concise, one-page fact sheet on an issue or bill is helpful. Leave it with the legislator as a reminder of the issue and also of the visit. State your opposition's side of the issue.
7. Legislators will appreciate knowing how others view a particular bill. In addition, this will provide you with an opportunity to rebut the arguments of your opposition.
8. Don't allow a disagreement over a position to end in harsh words or personal remarks.
9. Ask your legislator specific questions: Are you going to support increased funding for education? Do you believe in the local autonomy of school boards? Do you think public funds should go to for-profit entities?
10. Follow up your visit with a letter or e-mail thanking your legislator for his or her time and reinforce your position.

**ADVOCATING BY PHONE**

1. Identify yourself by name, address, city or town, and as a school board member. Identify the bill you wish to speak about by number.

2. Briefly state your position on the bill and how you would like the legislator to vote.
3. Ask for your legislator's position on the bill. If he or she requires further information, supply it as quickly as possible.
4. Thank the legislator for past votes which you supported.
5. Don't expect to speak directly with your legislator each time you call. If your legislator is unavailable, provide your information to his or her secretary, and request that the legislator return your call.

### WRITING A LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

1. If you write a letter, address it properly, ask your legislator to state a position in the reply, and include your full name and address to identify yourself as a registered voter in the legislator's district. Make it clear you are a member of the school board, too. You share the same constituency.
2. Remember that your letter may be one of hundreds of pieces of correspondence that your legislator will receive. Therefore, make it easy to scan its contents to get the message. Give each point a separate paragraph, and state your main point in the first sentence.
3. As with anything you write, short sentences are better than long ones. Plain words are better than jargon.
4. Be specific and to the point. Avoid analogies, metaphors, and generalities. Avoid "educationese."
5. Try to limit your letter to a single subject on a single page.

### E-MAIL

With today's technology, electronic mail can have the same effect as a letter and be written and sent with ease right from your computer. You should follow the same general guidelines as you

would when writing a traditional letter and always remember to include your name and mailing address in the e-mail. If your legislator or his/her staff members are unsure you are a constituent, your message may not be read. Remember to always "cc" the TSBA Director of Government Relations with your e-mail correspondence. This paper trail will aide him/her in his/her lobbying efforts.

### DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE MEDIA

The power of the media can be one of your most effective advocacy tools. Legislators look to their local media to determine what issues are important to their communities. Write letters to the editor on current issues affecting education and be available for interviews with newspaper, television, and radio reporters. Be sure to be concise so that your views are reported accurately.

Through frequent contact with the media, you can develop solid and professional relationships with education reporters and editors. If your information has been beneficial to their stories, you will find them turning to you for your opinions on education issues, allowing you to shape the story, and in turn, the opinions of others, including legislators.

Effective legislative advocacy is a continuous educational process, and some of the most effective advocacy takes place at the grassroots level. Most legislators are willing to listen to influential persons in their constituency. They like to hear familiar voices, see familiar faces, and they usually find it easiest to communicate with individuals from their home area.

## Key Steps to Legislative Advocacy

There are four key steps necessary to effective legislative advocacy. By following these steps and adapting them to your local needs and resources, TSBA's legislative efforts are greatly enhanced.

### **Step One: Gather the Necessary Information**

Information is power. Knowing how to gather useful information will make you a powerful advocate for public education. The following are information resources that you will find helpful:

- Voting record of the legislator;
- Background of the issues;
- Available resources – people, time;
- Media contacts; and
- Mailing lists/phone lists of key association members.

### **Step Two: Develop a plan**

Planning is an essential element in any activity. By planning, you can identify short-and long-term goals and create a series of steps that lead to the attainment of the association's legislative program.

### **Step Three: Organize and Implement**

The organizing component involves bringing people and other resources together to accomplish your objectives. Some keys to effective organizing and implementing are:

- Drawing on the talents of fellow board members;
- Utilizing systems (i.e. telephone, letters, etc.) for effective communications; and
- Enlisting the skills/resources of parents and others interested in public education.

### **Step Four: Review and Evaluate**

Evaluation is an important part of any effective legislative effort. When and how you do the evaluation may depend on whether the activity was for a short-term objective – such as lobbying for a specific bill – or whether you are assessing the success of the entire year. The following are important points to remember when conducting an evaluation of your activities:

- Record successful techniques;
- Let people know your accomplishments;
- Show appreciation; and
- Set goals for the next challenge.

# Making Congress Aware of Local School Needs

## Taking Boards Positions

In order to have a real impact on the policy decisions made in Washington, D.C., remember the golden rule – make a habit out of advocacy.

Effective advocacy for education is a year-round job. It's not enough to wait until there is a crisis on Capitol Hill. To win in the advocacy game, you need to work throughout the year to develop and nurture relationships with your members of Congress and their key staffers.

Generally, that requires passing an advocacy policy for your school district that states explicitly your district's commitment to advocacy for education then following up with regular advocacy actions.

The policy includes a directive to get involved in advocacy at the state and national levels. It sets up an advocacy committee with a point person to join a nationwide advocacy network – such as NSBA's Federal Relations Network – and to give regular advocacy briefings at board meetings. The board agrees on who has authority to sign letters and use board letterhead. The media contact person on federal advocacy is selected.

Regular advocacy actions include taking positions on education issues, publicizing them by way of the media, and notifying your Congressman to be part of the action.

### Why is your advocacy so important?

Your advocacy is critical because there is a vital need to deliver our message. The education of our children must become a top priority of our nation's policy makers. In this time of shrinking budgets, our leaders in Congress must understand that education is too important investment to be placed on the proverbial chopping block. The need is only increased by the barrage of federal laws and regulations that place tough mandates on local school districts. These make it imperative for school board members and educators to get involved in the broader political arena.

### Can you really have an impact?

Absolutely! Members of Congress listen to the folks back home, particularly those who have knowledge in the area in which they are advocating. You are truly on the front lines of education and can explain the real-life impact of federal policy decisions. That kind of information is invaluable to members of Congress. You are also a leader in your community who shares an electoral base with your members of Congress. Most members of Congress are influenced by two key sources:

1. Communication from constituents, particularly face-to-face contact, and insightful, personal letters/e-mails; and
2. Positions expressed in the local media, opinion editorials, and resolutions adopted by elected bodies.

### Writing Your Members of Congress

Personal, thoughtful letters/e-mails have a considerable impact on your members of Congress. As a school board member, the most effective way to write to your members of Congress is as a representative of your entire board; however, individual letters are the next best thing. To make certain that letters can be written in the often brief time frame of national politics, a school board policy needs to be in place authorizing a point person on the board, on behalf of the board, or for the board president's signature.

When writing your letters/e-mails, keep the following in mind:

1. Focus on one issue or bill per letter and identify the bill by name and number.
2. Express your point of view and explain why your legislator should be supportive. Be brief and courteous.
3. Briefly explain the local impact of the legislation.

4. Request that your member of Congress take a specific position on the bill. If you want your member of Congress to support the bill, you may want to ask him/her to co-sponsor it or to vote for its passage.
5. When writing an individual letter, use your signature and personal letterhead and state that you are a board member. If it is a collective letter written by the board, the superintendent of the board can sign it and put it on the board's letterhead.
6. Ask for a response from your member of Congress. Make sure your return address is on the letter (envelopes often get lost) so that your member of Congress can respond.
7. Always "cc" the TSBA Director of Government Relations when writing to a member of Congress. This paper trail will aide him or her in his or her lobbying efforts

### Calling Your Members of Congress

Phone calls are an effective and fast way to communicate with your members of Congress, especially when a critical vote is coming up. Phone calls remind members of Congress that constituents are closely monitoring their votes. Sometimes, you may be able to talk directly with your member of Congress or his/her key education staffers and have a more substantive conversation. Other times, your calls may be tallied by the receptionist and your members of Congress given count of constituents for and against the particular issue.

When phoning one of your members of Congress, keep the following in mind:

1. Ask to speak with the members of Congress or the legislative assistant who handles the issues, or briefly state your position to the receptionist. This is one of the times your carefully nurtured relationship pays dividends.
2. Give your name, title, and school district.
3. Focus on one issue or bill. Whenever possible, identify the bill by number and name.

4. Briefly state what position you want your member of Congress to take on the issue. Be prepared to give a locally-based rationale for your position.
5. Ask for your member's position on the bill.
6. If asked, give your address so that you can receive a written response.

To contact your U.S. senators and representatives: call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your senator's or representative's office. You can use local directories or NSBA's U.S. Congressional Directory to find phone numbers for their local district offices.

To contact the White House: call the White House comment line at (202) 456-1111.

### Working with Congressional Staff

Key staff are the movers and shakers behind any congressional office – their opinions and knowledge are passed on to their member of Congress. You should get to know the education staffer by name so that he/she will know you by name. If your member of Congress is a leader in a committee or subcommittee, she/he will also have committee staff who are the member's point person on the business of the committee. Those staff members need your attention as well.

It is also advantageous to get to know the chiefs of staff for both your member's Capitol Hill staff and local district offices. Whenever you contact your member in writing, send a copy to the staffer's attention or place a courtesy call so the staff will know that an issue of concern to school board members is being considered in Congress. When you plan to meet with your member, let the staffer know and keep in touch throughout the year.

### Visiting Congressmen

Meeting in person with your members of Congress is the most effective way to make your views known and influence legislation. You can visit your members of Congress in Washington, D.C. or at their district offices back home. Members of Congress schedule

district work periods specifically so they can meet with constituents. They are often in their districts when Congress is not in session and also on Mondays and Fridays.

In addition to going to your Congress member's office, consider inviting your member of Congress to visit a school in your district to see programs in action! If a face-to-face meeting cannot be arranged, consider setting up a conference call with your member of Congress and several other education advocates.

**The following are tips for setting up a meeting:**

1. Write or call your Congress member's local or Washington, D.C. office and ask for the scheduler. State the subject(s) to be discussed and the time needed. Most meetings in Washington, D.C. last 15 to 20 minutes, although meetings in the home district can last longer, especially if coalitions of people are included.
2. Depending on the issue, arrange to make your visit along with several other school board members, educators, or community members to demonstrate broad support for your position. Let the scheduler know who will be attending the meeting with you.
3. Call TSBA to let them know that you have a meeting scheduled. They will work with NSBA to provide you with the most up-to-date briefing materials for your meeting.

**Tips for a Successful Meeting:**

1. Call the staffer to discuss issues in advance of the meeting and afterwards.
2. Hold a pre-meeting with everyone who will attend the meeting to make sure all agree on your position. Decide in advance who will discuss which points so that your visit runs smoothly.
3. Be concise and focus on just a few issues or bills. Remember that the member of Congress may have no understanding of the bill, so be

prepared to educate him/her.

4. Whenever possible, speak from personal experience. Provide brief anecdotal evidence of how this issue affects your local school district and the Congress member's constituents.
5. Ask directly for your Congress member's support. If your member of Congress is supportive ask him/her to urge other members of Congress to support your position. If your member of Congress disagrees with you, hear him/her out politely, express respectful disappointment, and rebut his/her argument if you have the facts to do so. Be courteous. You'll have other issues to take up in the future.
6. Always provide a concise, one-page fact sheet or letter describing your position to be left with the member of Congress as a reminder of the issues and your visit.
7. After the meeting, write a letter to thank your member of Congress for his/her time and reinforce your position.

**Linking with Other Agencies**

Coalition building is a natural part of your local leadership as a school board member and it can be a powerful advocacy tool. When working on a specific effort, decide if a coalition will help achieve your goals. Think about the nature of the issue - some issues have a broader appeal than others. If your issue is strictly a school board issue, pursue it individually or with your school board team. However, if it is a broad issue of interest to all or part of public education or your community, pursue a coalition.

Look to other school boards, teachers, parents, administrators, other local elected officials, business leaders, advocates, etc. to join your effort. Ask yourself who else has a stake in the outcome of the issue and how important it is to them. Also, consider who may have a particular influence with decision makers on the issue.

### Working Through NSBA for Children

One of the best ways to increase the influence of your school board is to join a broader network of education advocates. NSBA's Federal Relations Network (FRN), made up of school board members from every congressional district, advocates in a united way for the interests of public education.

FRN members work together with the legislative staff of NSBA's Office of Advocacy . These staff members routinely visit members of Congress and executive branch policy makers. FRN members are kept informed about federal activities through "Calls-to-Action" via phone, fax, mail, or e-mail.

FRN members work throughout the year – calling, faxing, writing, and visiting – to develop strong relationships with their members of Congress. Their consistent advocacy efforts make a real difference.

Don't forget to contact TSBA after meeting, corresponding, or talking to your member of Congress to let the association know how he/she responded to your issues of concern.

FRN holds an annual meeting each February in Washington, D.C.

## Using the Media to Build Public Support

Public schools deal with two of your community's most important resources: its money and its children. As a result, schools are news. Big news.

Sometimes, the schools are not the source of good news. Things do go wrong, and the media and public want to know about it.

Often, schools are the source of good news. Successful programs, meaningful community involvement, good management, and planning are often taken for granted.

While it would be nice if the media focused more on the positive, the reality is that schools are a public institution, and the news media perceives its role as that of a watchdog for the public interest.

The challenge, then, is to deal sensibly and effectively with the media when the news is bad and to develop techniques, strategies, and relationships designed to improve the odds of delivering a more positive message.

### What is the Media Today?

Today, most marketing and communications programs are integrated, blending a mix of employee communications, media relations, social media, community relations, and paid media tactics.

"You can buy attention (advertising). You can beg for attention from the media (PR). You can bug people one at a time to get attention (sales), or you can earn attention by creating something interesting and valuable and then publishing it online for free."

We are in a time of a new age of media. Some may call it a media revolution. The task is to do the research, develop a plan, and act on it. We must join the media movement, invest time in understanding it, and implement the new techniques into a communications plan.

What was once considered a trend has become a way of life - and now the way we do business.

### Are You Activating Your Constituents?

The key to using media as a benefit often isn't determined upon which tactical approach is used but whether the strategy behind it matches the audience and makes sense given each school system's targeted objective.

### How Can You Do It?

Sometimes even the word "media" can make people anxious. There are so many different media channels, levels of expertise and an abundance of new information that it can make it difficult to know where to begin.

**The first priority is to understand the role the school board plays or you, as an individual board member, plays in your constituents' life.** Once you have a better understanding of your role or purpose, you must take the time to understand the role that your constituent plays for you or your school board. Understanding your audience is a key objective to effectively communicating through media.

When understanding your role, you must tell your story, or set the record straight. For far too long, educators have allowed others to set the public's agenda for public schools. With societal changes, we live in communities where facts often don't matter, suspicion is high, and the economy has undermined national confidence. School boards must take more pride in their accomplishments and more care in how they conduct the public's business. Choose your words carefully. Share the facts. Cut the jargon and statistics. Ultimately, focus on areas of agreement, set aside issues that create the greatest conflict, and tell your story.

Understanding your audience is imperative in order to shape the message you are trying to deliver. Because public schools deal with two of the community's most valuable resources, you must prepare to deliver a message to a large variety of individuals throughout your community. Regardless of the audience, you, as the primary local public education source, will be placed in the spotlight to have all of the answers. You won't have them, but being prepared will become your best asset.

**The second priority is action.** Identifying the actions the school board must take to increase public support will only prepare you for the third priority of creating momentum.

Utilizing content marketing and developing a strategy will better allow you to take action in building public support. The strategy may involve the following: Defining your audience; Defining your message; Defining your channels; Defining your purpose, and Asking what your content stands for.

You may also find it useful to ask the following questions when developing and/or implementing a strategy: What resources do I have; What expertise do I have; What topics should I target; What results do I want, and What actions do I want them to take.

Defining the message involves taking a look at what makes your district unique. Developing a unique selling proposition (USP) will help prepare a message to explain what makes your district unique, special, different, or better. The key is to capture this message in a few words. This USP can serve as a focus for your media communications strategy.

Before you are ready to articulate these key messages, you must clearly define and articulate some basic traits. The following page provides a toolkit to develop a USP or key messages for your school system.

Once you understand your message by creating a unique district communications strategy, you must define your channels. There are an abundance of media channels available. The right channel will depend on the staff's time and expertise, budget restraints, and system demographics.

The primary media channels that tend to be the primary focus for school board members are the news media and the social media channels. These are just two of the many outlets that school boards have access to or may be confronted with.

## Building a Relationship with the News Media

Face-to-face communications are sometimes the most effective means for changing attitudes and establishing opinions. Face-to-face relationships with the news media are valuable, too, no matter how busy you are. They are a time investment you can't afford to overlook.

As you become more important to your district, you become more important to your community and the reporters that cover that community. To them, you are a news maker, a resource person, a "quote person," and – too often – a stranger. As a public official, you have to prove to reporters that you are a trustworthy, fair source, which takes time and effort on your part.

### To improve your relationship with the media:

1. Make an effort to meet regularly with the reporters who cover your district. This might mean visiting their offices, getting together for lunch, making a point to chat with them at community (not school-related) affairs, or have a media briefing.
2. Ask for – and listen to – what reporters have to say about your district. These people are in close touch with many facets of your community and probably have a good feel for what the community thinks about various educational issues and programs.
3. Watch, listen, and read the media that cover your district so you are familiar with their formats.
4. Periodically call or e-mail and tell a reporter when he/she did a good job.

5. Keep in mind that the media isn't in business to help you with your communications needs. It is in business to (1) make money and (2) disseminate news. News is information that is of interest to the public. Some of the information you'll need to disseminate to the public isn't news, and you shouldn't expect it to be used by the news media. On the other hand, many opportunities for news are often over-looked because they aren't brought to the media's attention in a newsworthy manner or usable format.

### Getting organized

Establishing good media relations not only depends on good relationships between people, but it also depends on being organized. That way, you can respond to the media's needs and provide timely, accurate information. School systems cannot assume that the media will come to them for news that the board may consider important. Positive media coverage requires a proactive school board approach in the following ways:

- Provide each media representative with a basic information packet about your district for background use. The packet might contain a one-page fact sheet covering enrollment, budget highlights, number of employees (by groups), time and date of school board meetings, square mileage of district, etc.; a map of the district and a mini-directory that provides names, addresses and phone numbers (office) of the superintendent and school board members. It's also important to include a list of all schools and departments, including the site address, phone number, and name of the administrator in charge.
- Establish a relationship with your media outlet's managers and editors and learn what they might be interested in reporting.
- Consult with school district staff to establish a list of story ideas related to the system's programs, achievements, and issues.

- Meet their deadlines because timing is crucial in the media.
- Have the following on file about the reporters that cover your district: name, address, phone number, name of reporter or assignment desk editor, deadlines, coverage area, and special topics of interest.
- Be certain that your school district has identified a media liaison (contact person), and that this person is kept informed and has the authority to provide the reporter with the appropriate sources of information. The suggestion is for the board chairman to serve as the primary media liaison.
- Spend some time to learn how the media in your community operate.
- Add the media representatives to your special mailing lists for district newsletters (staff and community), special purpose brochures, school board agendas and minutes, and special reports.

The differences between information and communication underscore the differences between managers and leaders. Managers push; leaders pull. Managers try to light a fire under people; leaders stoke the fire within. Managers focus on facts; leaders focus on feelings. Management is intellectual; leadership is emotional. Managers inform; leaders communicate. As board chairman, it is your responsibility to both manage and lead your school board and school system towards effective communication. It is important that all board members, especially the board chairman, follow the chain of command in the media - start with the reporter. Always remember that your role is that of the school board chairman representing the district, not as an individual with personal issues.

### When You are Asked to Respond to a Reporter

Even if you have a public information specialist on your staff, you and the superintendent are still the primary district spokespersons and should respond to the media's inquiries in a timely and accurate manner. When the media calls you for a comment, the reporter wants to talk to YOU... NOW. A common complaint reporters have about school board members is their easy accessibility when they want a story to be told and their inaccessibility when the news is not so good. It is in your best interest in the long run to establish a consistent policy of forthright responsiveness to all media inquiries.

- If you are unavailable when a reporter calls, be sure whoever answers the phone asks for the reporter's deadline. If you are in a meeting that is expected to run past the deadline, the co-worker should ask the reporter what the inquiry is about and ask if someone else could provide the information. If not, you may want to consider instructing your co-worker to interrupt your meeting. The more insistent the reporter is about talking with you, the more important it probably is that you talk to him/her.
- When giving a reporter an impromptu statement on the phone, jot down what you said. This will provide for consistency of response in the event another reporter calls on the same subject and could be helpful in the event you are seriously misquoted. Ask the reporter if they would be willing to email the question and allow you to respond via email. This will allow you time to prepare your information and respond accurately.
- If an issue heats up, acknowledge the very real possibility that a reporter will call and ask you about it. Go over in your mind the kind of questions you might be asked and determine the kind of messages you want to communicate. (This process can be helpful with lots of other people too, including parents.)

- Avoid saying “no comment” unless you want the reporter to report that you would not answer his/her question or interpret why you are not answering his/her questions.
  - If you are backed into a corner and are faced with a question you can’t or don’t want to answer, tell the reporter you are not ready to answer that question and provide a reason. A helpful response to a question on a personnel matter may be: “I want to answer that question, but I’m concerned because some of the information may be confidential (by board policy or law).”
  - Never say something you expect to be “off the record.” While some reporters may keep the information confidential and use it only for their background knowledge, there is the possibility that something you say “off the record” could be very newsworthy and could appear in the media because the reporter has taken your tip and found someone who would confirm it “on the record.” The reporter might say, “The board chairman told me that the district is planning to ask for a bond issue. Could you give me some details of your planning?” A staff member asked this information might happily comply with the inquiry unaware that the chairman’s comment was “off the record” because, as an example, the decision had not yet been made by the school board.
  - Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know, I’ll call you back in 15 minutes” when you are unsure of your facts. Check your facts and call back... in 15 minutes or less!
  - If a reporter interrupts you before you have finished answering a question, pause, let the reporter finish, and then continue your answer. Don’t get into a shouting match, but don’t let the interviewer tell you when you have finished your answer. However, if the reporter keeps interrupting, there may be a reason.
  - If a reporter asks several questions at once, say something like “You’ve asked several questions here. Where would you like me to begin?”
  - Don’t repeat the reporter’s terms unless you want to be quoted on them.
  - If a radio reporter calls you, assume the conversation is being taped. Keep your answers short and to the point.
  - Never—absolutely never—lie to a reporter. Honesty will help build trust between you and the media.
- Understanding What Makes the News Media Go**
- To work successfully with clients, associates, or even opponents, you must first understand all you can about what they need, what their views are, where they’re coming from, and where they want to go.
- Work with reporters begins the same way – understanding their motives and what biases they bring to their jobs. However, don’t prejudge what is meant by the word “bias” here.
- First and foremost, news media outlets are businesses. They are in business to make a profit, meaning their news coverage is designed to build an audience. News must sell.
- Some stories – murders, political scandals, major fires – are “must cover” stories for most news departments. Yet, these and similar categories make up only a small fraction of the news which appears in print or is broadcast on daily basis. Most of the other covered stories of the day met the “3-C test”: conflict, criticism, or controversy. Consciously or subconsciously, reporters, editors, and news directors ask themselves these kinds of questions when considering whether to do news story:
- Does it have consequence to many people?
  - Does it have prominence for a place in people’s lives?
  - Does it have immediacy?

- Does it have heroes and/or villains?
- Does it present a "slice of life" for feature exposures?

When you're talking about television news, one more question rates above them all: Does it have pictures?

When the call from the reporter comes in, keep in mind that the caller is usually motivated by a story that has one of these elements: conflict, criticism, or controversy.

### Getting the News Media to Publish Positive News

News releases, fact sheets, tip sheets, and media advisories are all part of your arsenal to get the good news about your district to the media.

Generally, districts that have public information specialists issue more news releases and media advisories and tend to get more coverage because the specialist is trained to perform this function.

Districts that do not have public relations personnel can also get their share of positive coverage by trying some different approaches. The truth is that there are literally dozens of topics that could provide positive coverage for your district if they were presented in a manner that makes them interesting to the reporter and the public.

1. Use the telephone or e-mail. When you have a good feature - like a graduate with 12 years of perfect attendance, a new before-and-after day care program, or a new education program - pick up the phone or computer and tell the reporters covering your district about it. Don't get frustrated or offended if they don't use your story suggestion. Keep offering ideas and building that personal relationship. Eventually, there will be a slow news day, and your story idea will be used.
2. Take advantage of the news opportunities at your school board meeting. By making sure the media has full and complete back-up information, is aware of board meetings at which major issues or new programs will be discussed (especially if the reporter doesn't regularly attend meetings), and you make

yourself available for questions immediately following the meeting, you can improve the media's coverage of your school board. Some reporters will call ahead to see what you think the major items are on the agenda. This is your chance to paint what could be a controversial topic in a positive light. First impressions for a reporter often prevail, so don't miss the opportunity to explain your position first. By talking with a reporter beforehand, you have the chance to get them to focus on what you think are the topics of interest, not necessarily what they find the most controversial.

3. Look for alternative media outlets. A story about senior citizen volunteer opportunities might receive good play in the senior citizens' center newspaper; the new business education curriculum might make interesting reading for the chamber of commerce; and the city's newsletter might love to carry an article on "youth in government" day.
4. Tip off reporters about stories that explain how your school is preparing children for the future. Be on the lookout for opportunities to tie your program into a current event, such as going green, while your students are building solar windmills to conserve energy.
5. Write a guest editorial on the board's visions and goals. Remember what Thomas Jefferson said: "The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do." If you think your editorial will be printed, submit the same article as a "Letter to the Editor." Newspapers almost always print all letters to the Editor, unless they are tasteless or offensive.

### Your Rights

While you have many responsibilities for gaining and maintaining good media relations, you also have the following rights:

1. You have the right to ask a reporter what an interview is about, how long it will last, the angle of the story, and why you were selected. Often the answers to these questions can better prepare you for the interview or point to a better source for the reporter.
2. You also have the right to request a copy of a report, proposal, or news story the reporter is asking you to comment on if you haven't seen it.
3. You have the right to refuse a reporter's request for information if you are not permitted by law to give it or you do not have directory information authorization from a child's parent or guardian. You have the right to (and should) politely refuse to comment on items under litigation or in negotiations.
4. You have the right to tell your story. Even if you are interrupted, you have the right to finish your sentence. You also have the right (and should) to try and provide the reporter with background information – preferably in writing.
5. You have the right to think about your answers. If a reporter calls you unexpectedly and you are unprepared to respond, find out when the reporter's deadline and tell the reporter you will call him or her back in time. Be sure you do! Taking just a minute to collect your thoughts might prevent you from providing inaccurate, damaging information.
6. You have the right to ask several reporters converging on you at the same time to wait for a few minutes so you can give them all a statement simultaneously.
7. You have the right to emphasize a point and to repeat it, if necessary.

8. You have the right, politely and positively, to bring inaccuracies to a reporter's attention. (Source: PR Pipeline)

**We've talked about disseminating good news, but first you must garner the information.**

- Ask each site to designate a "reporter." Give them some training (perhaps led by a reporter from your local newspaper) on what the media needs in terms of format, style and content.
- If you have a public relations person on your staff, help this person to be more effective by:
  1. Making sure your building administrators know to whom news and information should be channeled.
  2. Emphasizing that the public relations person does not have a crystal ball (and neither does the media) and depends on the information that is provided.
  3. Letting your staff know that the PR person's priority is to provide news that the public must know and should know.
  4. Encourage staff members at all levels to fill out a fact sheet or story idea forms.

### Keeping Media Relations Positive

There are some things we say and do that make us unpopular with the media. Here are some tips to keep your media relations positive:

- Be sure to let the media know if a scheduled event has been cancelled or the location has changed.
- Don't presume to tell a reporter what is or is not newsworthy. This decision is made by the reporter and his/her editor.

- Don't ask a reporter when an article will be in the newspaper or a story aired because "I don't get your paper" or "I don't watch (listen to) your station." It's also good advice not to ask for clippings or tear sheets of a story after it appears.
- Keep your cool. It's easy to get emotionally involved in a school issue, but it doesn't help you when you're dealing with the media. Count to 10, take some deep breaths and remember it's not you personally who is being attacked, it's the district's position on an issue that is being scrutinized.
- Save your battles for the "really big ones." Remember the words of an old sage who said he made it a practice never to fight with someone "who bought ink by the barrels and paper by the ton."
- You do have the right (and responsibility) to complain when the media is inaccurate. Take your complaint to the reporter first and point out the factual mistake. If the factual errors continue, contact the reporter's supervisor or editor, but be sure you have the documentation to support your claim.

Don't be afraid to admit mistakes when you make them. If something goes wrong, admit it, and tell the media what you're doing about it. Don't try to cover it up because it won't stay covered up for long, and you will be on the defensive. It's always better to be on the proactive side when there's bad news to be told.

#### Soliciting Editorials

An editorial packs a lot of punch in a few well-chosen words. Although it is merely one's opinion, it represents the opinion of a powerful community voice – print or broadcast organizations.

Usually the editorial staff of a newspaper or the radio/TV station manager/owners will discuss local "hot topic" issues to formulate arguments and calls-to-action on the chosen topics. Often, these editorials follow news stories and are, therefore, based on information the news organization has

already gathered on an issue. However, that doesn't preclude school officials from meeting with editorial boards to bring other issues to mind. This is a good opportunity to bring your issues to the forefront and get the media "powers that be" on your side before the community has an opportunity to respond. Often, an editorial in support of the school and/or school board will lead to positive feedback from the community, which can easily be swayed by editorial opinion.

## Building Your Elevator Speech

As public school advocates, every school board member should have a prepared “elevator speech” in his or her pocket that can be given in the time it takes to ride an elevator. The elevator speech is comprised of a two-three minute story about the importance of public schools in your local community, supported by a couple of key facts.

**Constituent:** “I know you from somewhere. Are you on the school board?”

**Board Member:** “Yes I am! I’m a proud member of the ABC County Board of Education.”

**Constituent:** “I wouldn’t want your job. Public schools are...”

**Board Member:** “Actually, I have the best job in the world. At ABC County Schools, we recognize every child is going to need an advanced education beyond high school in order to compete, so we’re making sure our kids experience a college-bound culture at school and at home.”

**Constituent:** “How do you do that?”

**Board Member:** “By talking about college and what it takes to get into good schools today every chance we get, from early childhood to high school graduation. We find that when kids know we expect more out of them, they tend to deliver. The same is true for parents, teachers, and principals. That’s why 95 percent of our kids graduate from high school and get accepted into the colleges they choose more often than kids from other schools. And we have the data to prove it.”

**Constituent:** “Wow! Sounds impressive. But aren’t parents today part of the problem?”

**Board Member:** “Not in our district. Our parents care deeply about their children’s success, and they help us make important decisions about our schools. We couldn’t do it without them.”

**Constituent:** “Really? But I thought you had a lot of poor families in your community.”

**Board Member:** “We do, but they understand that education will make a difference for their children or grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. They still want and deserve the best, and we give it to them. In fact, our parent workshops are so good we’ve had 20 parents decide to go back to school or college to finish up their degrees. It’s really very exciting to be a part of public schools today.”

**Constituent:** “But I thought your schools have a lot of problems with violence and drugs.”

**Board Member:** “Who told you that? You can’t believe everything you see on the news or hear from others. If you’d like to come visit one of our schools and find out what’s really going on, give me a call or email me. I’ll set it up for you. In the meantime, here are some facts about our schools. Maybe you can help me set the record straight about how well our public schools are working in our community. (Hands card with contact information and message, website, and social media outlets on one side, “wow” facts about the district, and QR Code/URL that links to the districts website or other materials on the other side.) Do you have a card? I can get you on our key communicator list if you would like.”

**Constituent:** “What’s a key communicator?”

**Board Member:** “It’s someone who gets e-mail updates about our schools and is willing to share that information with someone they know. Key communicators also commit to contacting us anytime they hear a rumor, so we can help correct the facts.”

**Constituent:** “Well, I don’t think I’m ready for the key communicator program, although it sounds like a great idea. You can put me on your distribution list though. I’ve enjoyed our conversation, and good luck to you!”

**Board Member:** “Thank you, and remember, our public schools work, from cradle to college or career.”

## General Tips for Newspaper Interviews and Electronic Media

Appearing before a camera or speaking into the airwaves can be a frightening experience. When preparing to be a guest on a television or radio program, consider the following tips:

1. Try to become familiar with the program prior to the scheduled appearance.
2. Have a few key points which you plan to make. Rehearse your message.
3. Don't rely on the interview's questions to cover key points. Practice bridging questions to subjects or aspects of subjects that are important to discuss. ("The real issue is...")
4. Never answer a question with just a "yes" or "no." Expand on answers to make a point.
5. Deliver messages convincingly. Keep messages simple and make sure body language is consistent with the core message.
6. Don't get mad. The audience sees someone who gets mad as someone who has no self-control. This ultimately undermines credibility.
7. Participate in discussions. When participating in a panel or group discussion, it's important to be heard. Don't get left out.
8. Speak conversationally.
9. Speak into the microphone.
10. Ignore studio technicians and other outside interference. Concentrate on the interviewer.
11. Turn a negative question into a positive response by making a point for the school district.
12. Do not repeat negative or "buzz" words. That only places more emphasis on them in the audiences' mind.
13. Watch non-verbal communication. Only 7% of a speaker's message is communicated by spoken word. The rest is dependent on the quality of the delivery – body language and tone of voice. Don't fidget or fold your arms.
14. Keep answers brief and make key points quickly.

### The Social Media Conversation

A large amount of evidence and studies find that the spread of social media can provide businesses instant, low-cost access to millions of consumers. So why is social media important? Social media defines the activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the sharing of words, images, video, and audio. In other words, social media is a conversation that takes place online. It's a conversation that many people are joining everyday and even every second! If your district does not have a social media presence, then you are missing an opportunity to communicate your vision.

Social media is people talking with people, which is nothing new. People are connecting with each other and creating communities on their own. People are sharing their passions, their outrage, their products and their messages. New technologies have given people the power to tune out messaging and marketing and tune to relevance and dialogue.

Social media can help organizations connect with existing communities and create new ones. You are no longer in the business of creating value. You are in the business of creating importance. People don't get their coffee from Starbucks because of "value".

Social media can seem difficult because there are so many social media options available. Sometimes, you may feel that there are so many channels, so many people, and so many conversations but so little time. You might ask yourself, "How do I decide what channels to use, what people to engage, and what conversations to join?" The answer to those questions will come from the development of a strategy.

As for any media outlet, you must also ask yourself what resources you have, what expertise you have, what topics should you target, what results you want, and what actions you want your social media audience to take. Look at the media channels you currently use and ask yourself these questions:

- What tone do these channels convey?
- Who are my intended targets?
- Am I reaching my intended targets?
- Do these channels reflect our Board's mission?
- What overall message does our school system brand communicate?
- What's missing?
- Where do these channels fall short?
- Are there people we should target but aren't?
- Online are we passive participants or actively engaged?

Asking questions reminds you who you are and who you want to be. It also indicates how social media can be used to complement your overall mission. The conversation has already started. Research before joining in.

### School Boards & Social Media: Do's & Don'ts

As elected officials, school board members tend to have more freedom in terms of social networking. With this freedom also comes responsibility. Remember, the public officials golden rule: Don't blog, tweet, or post anything you wouldn't want splashed across the front page of the daily newspaper.

### Analyze your image.

When you have a social media account, you should always be aware of what your social media profiles say about you and your district. Profile photos, photos, wall posts, activities, interests, political leanings and religious views could be publicly viewable and fair game for the media. You want to communicate your vision and goals for your district, so take the time to ensure that your strategy is accurately reflected in your social media outlets.

### Consider your content.

Posts are widely accessible, easily shared, and long lasting. Something posted half-hazardly or by mistake will most likely remain on the internet for a very long time. Ensure that what is posted is a positive reflection of the district. You must also know your audience when you are considering the content you want posted. Ask yourself "who will be reading this?" If the audience is parents, then approach your message from a parental point of view.

### Perception is always reality.

As you may already know, there can be a difference between what is reported and the reality of any given situation. There are numerous cases where a board member or administrator has said they were taken out of context or what they said was not portrayed in the correct light. This is why any story communicated through social media must accurately reflect the district's position or vision. Doing so will help you avoid a headache in the long run.

### Represent your district proudly.

Use social media to highlight the positive things happening in your district. Showcase community involvement in your schools and promote district events. Save board business for school board meetings. You do not want to have a debate on Twitter or Facebook. Also, consider the effects of advocating for polarizing issues online. While your district may support a certain position, some things are better communicated in person.

### Here are some quick tips provided by the National School Boards Association:

- Board ethics and conflict of interest policies apply to social media outlets. Don't use social media to leak closed session materials and/or information that is protected by law.
- Keep the tone conversational and informal, but use proper grammar and show the same sensitivity regarding word choice you would in other venues. If this is difficult for you, have someone follow behind you as a proofreader before you hit send.

- Social media is a commitment. If you don't want to keep sites updated, it's better not to start them in the first place. Helpful content management programs, such as Hoot Suite, that can update all social media sites simultaneously help.
- Snarky doesn't play well if you're not a teenager. Keep your comments professional.
- Connect your site to the official district website, social media outlets, etc.
- Be transparent - let people know who you are and what you stand for. Don't hide behind the anonymity afforded by social media.
- Take the high road. You'll take some unfair hits - that comes with the territory. Don't get into fights with parents, students, teachers, and other bloggers. You will lose.

Let people know what the rules of the game are for your sites. As the "editor," you have the right to remove profane comments and manage the privacy/security settings.

### A Note About Online Communication

In meeting the challenges confronting public schools today, the governance role is as crucial as it is overlooked and misunderstood. The need for school board members to be communicators and advocates has never been greater. However, the reality in many communities - especially in larger media markets - is that reporters and voters tend to ignore school board and school board elections unless some controversy is brewing. Fortunately, the internet has opened inexpensive and convenient opportunities for board members to help overcome this reality.

Most school district websites include a section devoted to the school board, typically featuring information on board functions and meetings, along with member bios, committee assignments, and the like. Some district websites include minutes and board policies as well. Increasingly, too, individual school board members are joining the national trend of setting up personal websites and blogs. A website or blog can be a powerful campaign tool, providing others with good information on board candidates that might otherwise be difficult to find. Even better, a website or blog can help board members keep their community informed about its schools, the board member's own perspectives, and national and state developments. It can even provide a forum for readers to post their own comments.

When an individual board member maintains a personal website or blog, however, it's important to make it very clear that the site is not an official site of the district or of the school board as a whole. The board member also must be careful to adhere to state law and board policies regarding ethics and confidentiality and exercise discretion regarding matters that are, or have the potential to be, subjects of litigation. The same good judgment that board members use in their other public communication is just as important in this forum as well.

(Reference: NSBA *Becoming a Better Board Member, Third Edition*)

## Generating Public Support

### Advocacy and Your Community

In addition to establishing an overall vision and becoming versed on the latest research topic, your board should begin sharing its ideas with members in the community. Community engagement is an essential step to help generate public support for your initiative and for gathering constructive feedback that will help to inform your plans.

Involving others in the discussion also demonstrates your responsiveness to the broader community, not just the school district, and can help identify potential barriers or opposition that might exist. Inviting outside groups to the table early on can help engender stronger bonds and partnerships than if approached later.

Most school board and school district staff members agree that public opinion can make or break schools and school districts. We know we have to communicate with our taxpayers on a year-round basis to gain their understanding and support.

We live today in a 24/7 world of work, with many other priorities competing with an active civic life for our shrinking spare time. In many localities, the amount of active engagement in the community at large - especially in local government activities and the political process - is diminishing.

### What can school boards do about it?

In an age of communications saturation, our constituents are bombarded each day with highly-sophisticated, well-planned messages. We (school districts) are not keeping up with the highly sophisticated marketing techniques that are now used to reach people, so our messages are often ignored, or worse yet, alienating the people we are trying to reach.

The way people receive information and react to information is changing. The "old ways" of putting out newsletters and issuing press releases have little chance of getting the results we want. We

can easily be deceived into thinking everyone read a particular story about schools because the people we see every day – those who are interested in schools – are the ones who read the story.

To govern effectively, you must first know your community's competing community values that come into play in board decision-making. You must know what your community wants for your schools and for the community.

One effective way to get this information is through community engagement. To understand public engagement, it is often helpful to start with what it is not. It is not a newsletter, a survey, or an effort to get community "buy-in" to a decision already made.

Community engagement is a long-term effort to generate community dialogue around broad issues that affect a school district and the community it serves. Engaging community members in face-to-face discussions about things important to them provides insight into what they value and how that affects what you are doing as a school district. It also can begin to create a shared sense of direction and a willingness to share responsibility.

**Here are some tips for successfully engaging your community:**

#### ***Begin with the right issue.***

You don't have to engage the community on every decision the board makes, but you should engage them in the big issues that have broad impact. The board should rely on data and staff expertise as part of their decision-making process when engaging community members in dialogue about such things as hiring a new superintendent or why families are leaving the school district.

***Frame the issue in community terms.***

It is important that boards and educators think "outside the box" in community engagement. If you want the public to participate in a discussion about the issue, it must be framed in terms that will be attractive and meaningful enough to get them to come to the meeting.

***Keep conversation going.***

There are a variety of ways to structure a public engagement program and no one way is right or wrong. However, it is important that engagement efforts be ongoing. Asking community members to discuss issues only when you want something will make them distrustful. The ideal would be to have several groups of people discussing several different issues.

***Don't forget staff and students.***

They are part of your school district community, and more important, your district family. Be sure that they are included in your engagement process. Keep staff informed about what you are hearing from the community. Providing them a better understanding of community values will only help their work.

***Planning***

When considering a community engagement effort, consider:

1. Does the full board feel it is important to engage the community? Why?
2. What will the board give up to make time for engagement?
3. How will the board use the results?

The key to effective engagement efforts is to have a well-planned system that invites people to participate with the board in discussing issues. When it works best, it encourages individuals to arrive at their own solutions to a common concern.

The public schools are attractive vehicles for keeping the public engaged in government and focused on the public interest. The reason is simple: the schools involve people's children.

Since schools are important to so many parents, taxpayers, and businesspeople, and because

they have the capacity to convene the public, schools can play a major role in bringing individuals and community groups together to address crucial educational issues. In doing so, schools can bring citizens together to work for the common good, breathing new life into the processes of generating public support. *Copyright © 2009, Center for Public Education. All rights reserved.*

**Public Involvement in Education**

The schools frequently provide adults with their first major opportunity to be involved with the community. In their roles as parents, taxpayers, and businesspeople, adults can get involved in decisions about what values to teach, what courses to offer, where to locate a new school, or whether to close an existing one.

Vibrant public engagement is also vital to the success of public education - and the public's ongoing support of it. The advice and volunteerism from the public can enrich the academic quality of our public schools and strengthen the schools' ability to prepare students to participate in American society. Through their involvement, the public can gain a better understanding of public education and its unique role in the community.

Beyond representing the community as elected officials, members of local school boards can actually increase community participation by inviting citizens to become more involved in the schools and empowering the public to participate in the decision-making process by attending board meetings or public forums or participating in district events and individual school activities.

Such involvement and experiences in education can lead to participation in other venues and provide a powerful model from the next generation,, as children, watch and learn from community member's civic involvement. What the schools do to include the public and how they do it will shape public education's contribution to advancing community life.

The school board's capacity to engage in the community extends beyond the formal actions the board may take. Local school board members engage the community as individuals every day in their personal lives, serving as a unique set of eyes and ears attuned to the schools and the public alike.

They talk with parents about their children, meet with reporters, address local clubs, and bring together citizen groups on a wide range of issues concerning the schools and their impact on the community. In effect, school board members connect what the school system is doing with what the community expects for young people in general and for individual children in particular. How well a school system engages the public and how the public believes its involvement will be received depend on the school board's policies and the priority it places on community engagement. It also depends on the overall climate of welcome and accessibility that the school board establishes and on its day-to-day engagement with constituents.

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### **Community Engagement Programs**

Use your school facilities to speak to the community.

In many communities, schools have the best facilities for classes, meetings, and other activities. In small or rural communities, the schools may have the only these facilities in the area. Yet in many districts these rooms and meeting halls may go unused when school is not in session.

The schools belong to the community. Why not let the community use them? Developing true community schools requires a commitment and "can-do" attitude on the part of school boards and administrators who are open to finding ways to make new ideas and programs work.

Some school districts have found innovative ways to open their schools to the community. They have developed community-oriented programs outside the traditional K-12 system that are consistent with their educational mission. Many

of the programs require financial support from the district, but the results can be worth the expense.

Such programs can help build a stronger sense of ownership in the schools and a wider base of support for raising taxes to fix up schools or build new ones. Sponsor a series of community education nights featuring useful information from which both parents and non-parents can gain. Of course, your board should have a well-written policy on use of school facilities, so there is little left to the asking.

### **What the Public Needs to Know About its Schools**

First and foremost, the public needs to be assured that it is getting its money's worth out of the schools. Take every opportunity to tell people how their money is spent in public schools. It's even more impressive if you can explain costs in simple terms. Talk about it in terms of what the program costs for one child for one day. Show what those dollars do for one child or what would happen to that child if the dollars for the program were not available.

The school system report card and the Board's strategic plan are excellent ways to report on the progress of your school system.

### **Giving Realtors the "Real" Story**

One of the biggest challenges to public schools is the perception by newcomers that the only choice for schools is a private one. Unfortunately, this pervasive attitude can result from realtors who have their children in private schools, or no school-age children. There's little doubt that schools help sell houses.

One of the first questions asked by potential homebuyers with school-age children is, "What about the local schools?" The realtor's response can either be a window of opportunity or a nail in the coffin for local public schools. If public schools don't get a good recommendation it's usually because the realtor doesn't know firsthand what goes on in the neighborhood school. It's your job to see that they do. Because schools help sell houses, it's to your advantage to take some time to be sure your realtors are as well-informed about your schools as possible.

Ask your community's realtors what kind of information they need about the schools in the community and how you can help them do their job. Find out what they are hearing about schools. Are there schools in the area that appear to be particularly attractive and unattractive to potential buyers? If so, why?

### TIPS:

- If you are forming committees to study school zone line changes, school closing, or facilities needs, try to include a realtor.
- Invite realtors to tour schools in the neighborhood, visit classrooms, and meet staff and parents.

### School/Community Partnerships

The average school volunteer is no longer a stay-at-home "mom." To improve educational opportunities for students, schools, and communities have expanded their volunteer programs to include, for example, retired scientists, high school seniors, local business people, stay-at-home fathers, or college students.

They have also turned to a second resource, partnerships. Partnerships can involve clubs and organizations, governmental or private agencies, businesses, and social service groups.

School districts have added "partnerships" to advocate school and community programs.

Businesses can offer release-time for employees to tutor students, surplus equipment, career and

management counseling, field trips, job-shadowing experiences, etc.

Foundations have a purpose in raising funds to support educational programs and provide scholarship opportunities. Clubs and non-profit organizations can provide tutors and educational materials.

### Where and how do partnerships begin?

One of the basic, and usually first, positive requests that comes from schools is for companies to release employees during work hours to tutor students. Such requests often develop into long-standing partnerships. Successful partnerships should include the five "C"s:

- 1) Cooperation;
- 2) Coordination;
- 3) Collaboration, plus an essential fourth "C";
- 4) Communication.
- 5) One final "C" for school/community partnership success – Creativity.

### Building Partnerships

Partnerships between schools and parents; between schools and businesses, and between schools and community agencies are becoming increasingly important to the success of our education system. There is increasing recognition that schools cannot be successful if they work in isolation.

The chances for success of any partnership are greater if the following conditions exist:

1. Partners agree about the nature of the problems and share a common vision for the future;
2. Businesses and schools, community agencies and schools, or parents and schools already have a history of working together;
3. Partners use an organized structure to coordinate the efforts of the partnership and to address system-wide issues;
4. Partnerships have the involvement of top leaders from any group or business involved and from the school district;

5. Partners focus on short-term goals but commit to sustained, long-term relationships; and
6. Goals are clearly defined and are measurable.

### **What If You Held A Public Hearing and Nobody Came?**

It happens. Countless news clips from across the state recount school board-sponsored public hearings where fewer than a dozen people attend. You throw up your hands in frustration exclaiming, "We've done all that we can do. We hold a public hearing, giving the public an opportunity to be heard, and yet nobody shows up."

Has your board really done all that it can do? Is it reasonable to ask hard-working parents who have meals and homework to oversee or empty-nest couples who'd rather be at the symphony concert to attend a public hearing for an update on the school system's building program? Ideally, they would be as interested in these matters as you are – but you're elected or appointed to be interested. They're not. Maybe the answer lies in how you go about getting their input.

Of course, nothing beats the value of face-to-face discussion. Just taking the effort to attend a public hearing indicates one's interest in an issue. However, what about the hundreds of others who really care but can't easily attend the hearing in person?

Have you considered e-mail? This allows your constituents to send their opinions right to your computer screen. What about a call-in line or sponsoring a town meeting at a local TV station where viewers can call in with comments?

Each of these situations allows the public to be heard without physically having to leave their homes at a certain time, thus allowing them to continue their busy lives while still commenting on school matters of concern.

School boards should plan opportunities for public comment. This does not necessarily mean opening doors in the evening hours. It can also mean turning on the computer or sitting by a phone. Either way, the message is heard.

## What Would Your Community Say About Your School Board?

*Circle the number preceding each item which you believe improves public support for the school board. Circle the number that best represents your opinion of how the community views the board's performance in each statement. Circle 4 if you think the community would strongly agree, 3 agree, 2 disagree, and 1 strongly disagree.*

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 1. Makes decisions that are in the best interest of the entire school system.  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 2. Is genuinely interested in improving the educational program.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 3. Seeks advice from all elements of the community regardless of race, socio-economic background, or political leanings. | 1 2 3 4 |
| 4. Makes itself accessible to anyone who wishes to express a concern.  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 5. Insists on educational programs that provide equal opportunity for all students in the system.                        | 1 2 3 4 |
| 6. Provides safe, clean, and attractive facilities for students.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 7. Is aggressive in seeking funds for schools.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 8. Manages the funds available to the system in the most effective manner.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 9. Employs the best director of schools available to the school system.  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 10. Cultivates healthy working relationships with the employees of the system.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 11. Recognizes and celebrates outstanding student performance.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 12. Does not tolerate mediocrity nor incompetence.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 13. Works harmoniously as a group.   | 1 2 3 4 |
| 14. Conducts meetings in a business-like fashion.  | 1 2 3 4 |
| 15. All members are informed and prepared to discuss issues presented at board meetings.                                 | 1 2 3 4 |
| 16. Seeks community input in regards to Board's strategic plan.  | 1 2 3 4 |

## Strengthening Public Support Through Employees

In advocating for education, school boards must recognize the important roles that staff members play in the success or failure of their schools. They should recognize and use the expertise of their employees, both certificated and non certificated.

An organization's image is primarily determined by its staff – what they say, think, feel, and do 24 hours a day. That is why advocacy starts in the school building and why it is important for all staff members to know their advocacy roles. Be sure all staff members know what is happening to them and the school district. Information is power. Staff members will resent not having enough information, and they will feel empowered and self-confident when they have good, accurate, up-to-date information. Ask staff members what the school district should be doing to reach its goals and use those answers as funding decisions are made.

### What Obstacles Stand in the Way of Teachers Taking on Advocacy Roles

Minimizing the grapevine through effective communication and employee involvement will help strengthen the public's support for the school district, but having your employees take on the role as advocates for the district will greatly help improve public support. Encouraging employees to become advocates may be difficult, but certainly not impossible. The following are a few obstacles that might stand in the way of teachers taking on an advocacy role:

1. Time...Time...Time.
2. Personal reluctance and fear of risk-taking on the part of teachers. "Those who have a vision of what needs to be are those who are willing to take a huge risk."
3. An us-versus-them atmosphere. The perception that school decisions are made by people who care more about their own status than about kids.
4. Community pressures.
5. Limits on teachers' energy, given existing day-by-day demands. There is dismay over added responsibilities.
6. Need for staff development and administrator's support.
7. Parents tend to expect their children's school experiences to mirror their own.
8. Parental reluctance to participate in school-related activities (except athletics).
9. Some teachers aren't particularly comfortable having parents in the classroom.
10. Teachers don't seem to have much "say" these days about what happens in education. Lack of respect from general public and from politicians.
11. Lack of support from colleagues, principals, and the district.
12. Media that goes against best practice.
13. Parental opposition to new practices.
14. Lack of informed state legislators.
15. Lack of informed citizens when it's time to elect local and state school board members.
16. Limited funding. No funds for dissemination of information.
17. Change takes time and energy.
18. Sometimes, teachers ignore reactionary groups which only increases the group's frustration and anger and leads them to seek further support.
19. Difficult to talk issues in the face of political agendas.
20. Lack of clear, articulated goals.

## What Boards Can Do To Encourage

### Employee Advocacy

How much do the staff in your school know about schools? How good do they feel about themselves, their jobs, and the school system? What kind of image do they project? The following are some helpful suggestions:

1. Publicly express appreciation to individual staff members who provide exemplary service.
2. Enclose a special thank you in paychecks to employees who have performed extra tasks.
3. Set aside special occasions for honoring various segments of employees, such as teachers and various divisions of support personnel.
4. Encourage PTA's or business partnerships to stage special breakfasts for various segments of employees.
5. Offer informational meetings to staff and conduct them in a manner that shows mutual respect between board members and staff.
6. Help employees do their best and be their best through appropriate training.
7. Appoint staff members to advisory committees. They can add an important perspective to the committee's work.
8. Include a wide range of staff in strategic planning, budget development, policy development, and major curricular changes.





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