Tennessee LEADERS FOR EQUITY *Playbook*


April 2018

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The Tennessee Department of Education, in partnership with its 147 districts and 38 educator preparation providers, recognizes the importance of making and supporting significant shifts in mindset and practice to provide and sustain equitable outcomes for all students. This focus on equitable outcomes for all students is reflected in the *Tennessee Succeeds* and ESSA strategic plans and impact all Tennessee's districts and schools.

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

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

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

highly trained school leaders *supported by* district leadership *and* school boards *and* community allies.
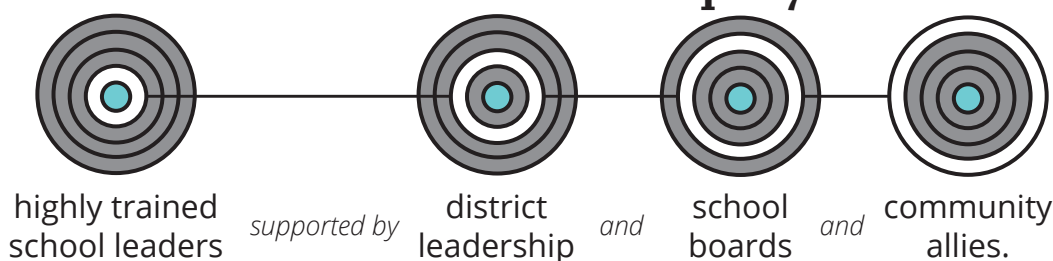
Who is a leader for equity?

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

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

About the Playbook

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

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

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

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

How to Use the Playbook

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

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

Equity Action Plan

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

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

EQUITY SHIFTS

Equity Commitment	Common Misconception	Equity Mindset	The research indicates...
Decrease Chronic Absenteeism	At-risk families value school less and therefore do not believe in the importance of regular attendance.	As leaders, we must believe, individually and collectively, that all of our families value the importance of their children's education and understand they can experience conditions that negatively impact regular attendance.	When low income elementary students attend school regularly, they can see outsized literacy gains. They gained 8 percent more growth in kindergarten and 7 percent growth in first grade than their higher income peers.[1] Attending school more than 90 percent of the time in sixth grade significantly improves the chance for students to graduate high school on time.[2]
Reduce Disproportionate Out of School Suspension and Expulsion Rates	At-risk students have less structure and consistency outside of school and therefore need more exclusionary discipline measures to instill the value of respect for authority.	As leaders, we believe and acknowledge, individually and collectively, that the lived experiences of many families differ and understand those differences do not equate to student deficiencies.	Lower-suspending schools have lower grade retention and higher graduation rates than higher-suspending schools.[3] Restorative disciplinary practices are associated with large reductions in suspensions and steady and consistent achievement gains.[4]
Increase Early Postsecondary Opportunities	Early postsecondary coursework is only for select students who want to continue on to postsecondary. For other students, especially those who are disadvantaged, finishing high school is the best we can hope for.	As leaders, we believe, individually and collectively, that all students can acquire the knowledge, abilities, and habits to be successful in postsecondary education and careers of their choosing.	Students completing AP courses attend college at higher rates, earn higher grades in college, are less likely to drop out of college, and graduate at higher rates that non-AP students.[5] Low-income high school students completing an early postsecondary course[6] were 50 percent more likely to earn a college degree within six years than low income students who didn't complete an early postsecondary course.[7]

[1] Ready, 2010
[2] Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007
[3] Fabelo, etc., 2011
[4] Gonzalez, 2014
[5] Mattern, Marini, & Shaw, 2013
[6] EPSOs in Tennessee include: Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, College Level Exam Program (CLEP), dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate (IB), local dual credit, statewide dual credit, and industry certification
[7] Struhl & Vargas, 2012

EQUITY SHIFTS

Equity Commitment	Common Misconception	Equity Mindset	The research indicates...
Provide Equitable Access to Effective Teachers	Teachers are all equally equipped and trained to be effective with all students, regardless of their evaluation outcomes.	As leaders, we acknowledge implicit bias in ourselves and our teachers and work to create an inclusive environment and provide supports to help educators improve and differentiate instruction for all students.	Students assigned to highly effective teachers accrue 18 to 24 additional weeks of additional learning compared to students assigned to ineffective teachers.[8] At-risk students assigned to highly effective teachers reduce the dropout rate by 3 percent.[9]
Recruit and Retain a Diverse Teaching Force	Teachers are all equally equipped and trained to be effective with all students, regardless of race.	As leaders, we work to acknowledge that students benefit from seeing teachers who look like themselves and address implicit bias when hiring, assigning, developing, and retaining teachers of color.	Students of color taught by teachers of color are likely to have positive gains in test scores, discipline, retention, and college persistence.[10] Significantly, these gains are realized even when students are not taught by teachers of color but attend a school where the diversity of the teachers more closely resembles that of the students.[11]
Embed Cultural Competence in All Aspects of School Practices	Racial and cultural identity do not impact the perceptions, beliefs, and actions of our students and educators.	As leaders, we acknowledge and celebrate the importance, value, and strength of our students' and educators' racial and cultural identities and work to eliminate personal and institutional biases and barriers.	A culturally responsive curriculum is an integral element in reversing poor academic outcomes for students of color.[12] Educators who acknowledge and understand cultural differences are better suited to promote parent and family engagement. This is important because increased parent engagement has a positive impact on school attendance, test scores, and rates of school discipline.[13]
Partner with Community Allies	Community partners exist to help with fundraising and carry out school funding needs.	As leaders, we believe community partnerships are stronger and more effective when, as allies, they serve a common vision, utilize the full range of assets of both partners, and provide mutually beneficial resources to improve the school community.	The development of school-community partnerships results in improved student learning, achievement, behavior, and attendance.[14] Schools benefit from school-community partnerships through increased parent participation in children's learning, including school volunteerism and increased resources (e.g., funding or material goods) to support student learning.[15]

[8] Cowan, etc. 2017
[9] Jackson, 2016
[10] Fillegas and Davis, 2008
[11] Pitts, 2007
[12] Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017
[13] Van Roekel, 2008
[14] Bryan & Henry, 2012
[15] Gross, 2015

Decrease Chronic Absenteeism

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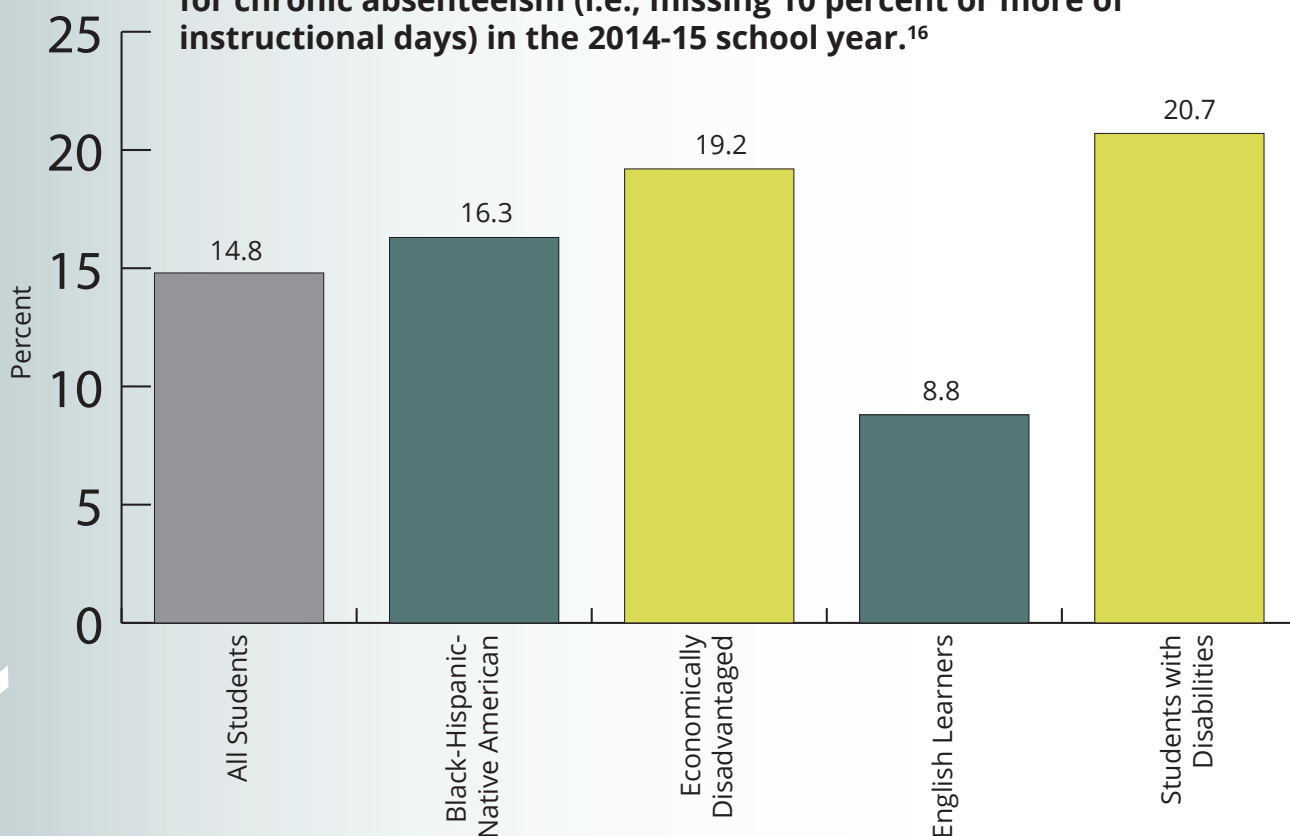
Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

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

In Tennessee, most sub groups were above the state average for chronic absenteeism (i.e., missing 10 percent or more of instructional days) in the 2014-15 school year.[16]

Sub Group	Percent
All Students	14.8
Black-Hispanic-Native American	16.3
Economically Disadvantaged	19.2
English Learners	8.8
Students with Disabilities	20.7

[16] Tennessee Department of Education's ESSA Plan, p. 168. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/documents/TN_ESSA_State_Plan_Approved.pdf

Recommended Actions
for decreasing chronic absenteeism

School Leader Actions

- Create a school-wide plan to partner with families and communities to understand attendance barriers and to create potential solutions together
- Establish a school-wide system for early identification and prevention of above average absenteeism
- Establish and reinforce an inclusive school culture that creates safety and support for all students (e.g., train staff and students in bullying prevention; provide access to clean clothes; create awareness around cultural, religious, and dietary diversity)
- Train educators and staff on bully prevention and cultural awareness of religious, ethnic, and dietary diversity
- Maximize TEAM to ensure teachers understand the rubric and its relationship to student engagement (refer to rubric indicators: Teacher Knowledge of Students, Motivating Students, Expectations and Managing Student Behaviors)

District Leader Actions

- Partner with educator preparation providers (EPPs) to ensure teacher candidates learn strategies for reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism and engaging families in multiple ways
- Provide training to all principals to develop effective monitoring systems and targeted prevention and intervention strategies including RTI[2]
- Using district-wide attendance data, targeted support for schools with high rates of absenteeism
- Support school leaders by allocating resources and personnel for wraparound supports
- Partner with law enforcement agencies to develop community policing models

School Board Actions

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

Community Actions

- Host town halls in collaboration with school leadership to inform families of policies and initiatives related to attendance, and share strategies for improving attendance
- Enforce employment regulations for students who work outside of school
- Utilize service vouchers (food, housing, utilities, transportation) to incentivize attendance in economically disadvantaged homes
- Provide teachers with tools and resources to support families with non-instructional needs such as laundry facilities and supplies, new or gently used clothing and uniforms

EQUITY COMMITMENT ONE

Reduce Disproportionate Out of School Suspension and Expulsion Rates

2

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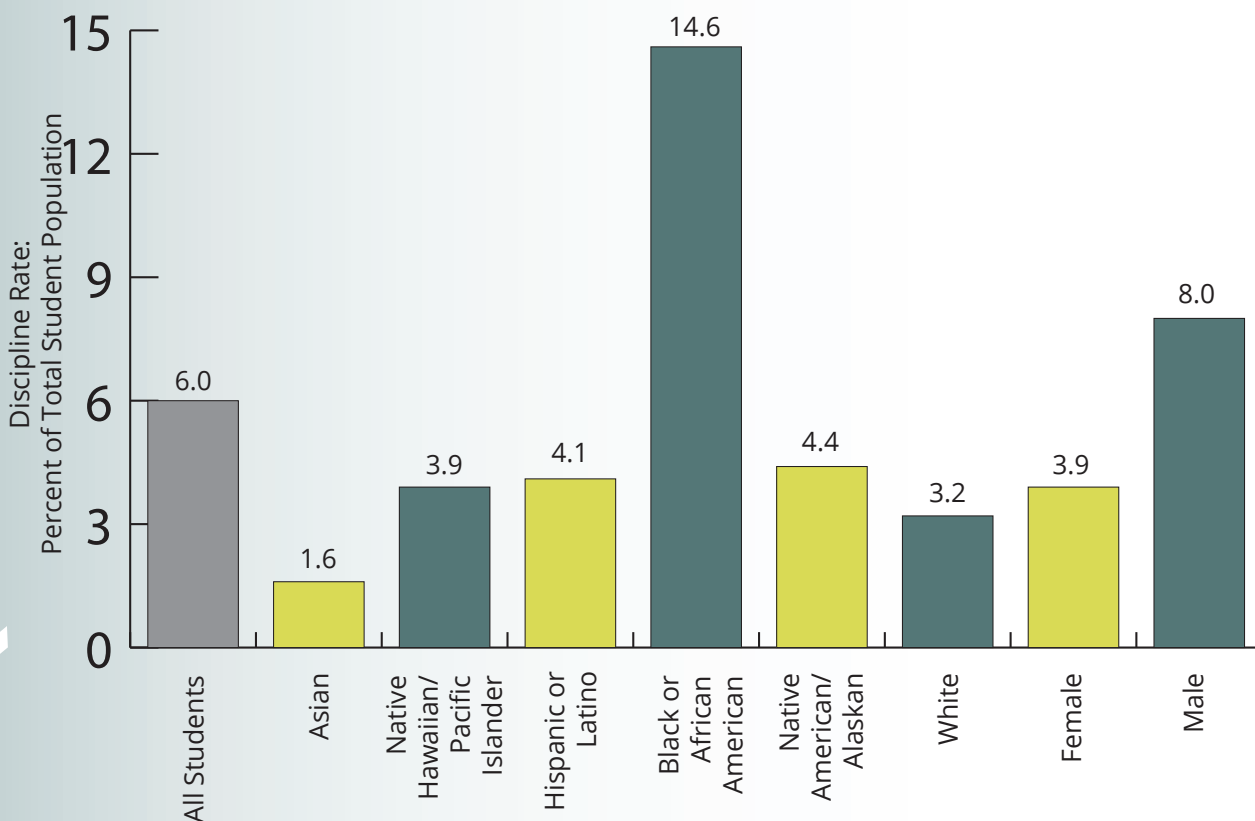
Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

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

In Tennessee, Black or African-American students were suspended at more than double the state average in the 2016-17 school year.[17]

Discipline Rate: Percent of Total Student Population

Category	Rate
All Students	6.0
Asian	1.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3.9
Hispanic or Latino	4.1
Black or African American	14.6
Native American/Alaskan	4.4
White	3.2
Female	3.9
Male	8.0

[17] Tennessee State Report Card, Education Climate. https://www.tn.gov/education/data/report-card.html

Recommended Actions
for reducing disproportionate out of school suspension and expulsion rates

School Leader Actions

- Train educators on restorative practices and align school policies to improve climate and culture
- Utilize School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- Apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations capably
- Utilize the department's toolkit and resource guide for integrating social and personal supports into the classroom and school building
- Train educators on mindsets, and implicit and explicit bias to reduce disparities in the issuance of punitive discipline
- Develop a communication plan for addressing ways in which families and the community receive information about school and district policies, ensuring information is available to families in multiple languages and formats
- Maximize TEAM to ensure teachers understand the Environment rubric indicators and their relationship to student engagement (refer to rubric indicator Managing Student Behaviors)

District Leader Actions

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

School Board Actions

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

Community Actions

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

Increase Early Postsecondary Opportunities

3

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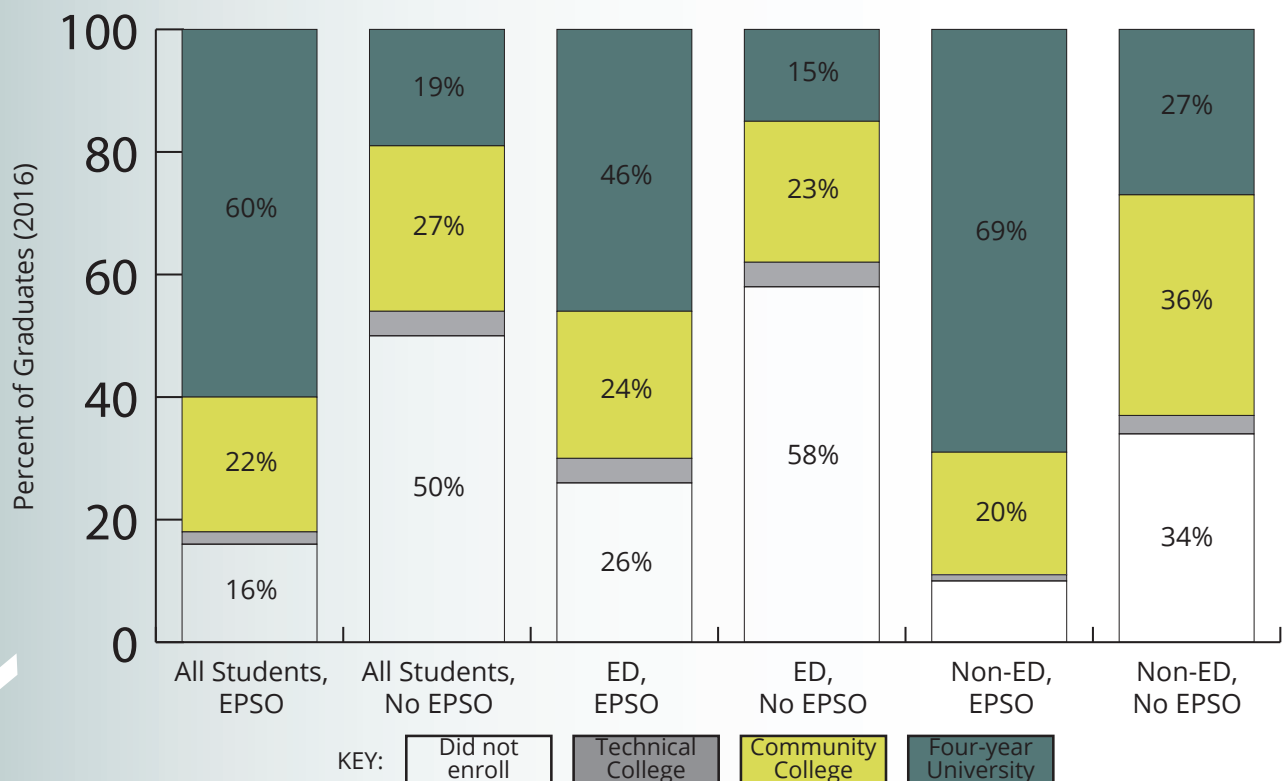
Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

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

In Tennessee, economically disadvantaged students who did not attempt an EPSO were more than twice as likely not to enroll in any postsecondary programs in 2016.[18]

Percent of Graduates (2016)

	All Students, EPSO	All Students, No EPSO	ED, EPSO	ED, No EPSO	Non-ED, EPSO	Non-ED, No EPSO
Four-year University	60%	19%	46%	15%	69%	27%
Community College	22%	27%	24%	23%	20%	36%
Technical College						
Did not enroll	16%	50%	26%	58%		34%

KEY: Did not enroll | Technical College | Community College | Four-year University

[18] Drive to 55 Pathways to Postsecondary Report, 2016. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/ccte_drive_to_55_report_state.pdf

Recommended Actions
for increasing early postsecondary opportunities

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

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

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

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

EQUITY COMMITMENT THREE

Provide Equitable Access to Effective Teachers

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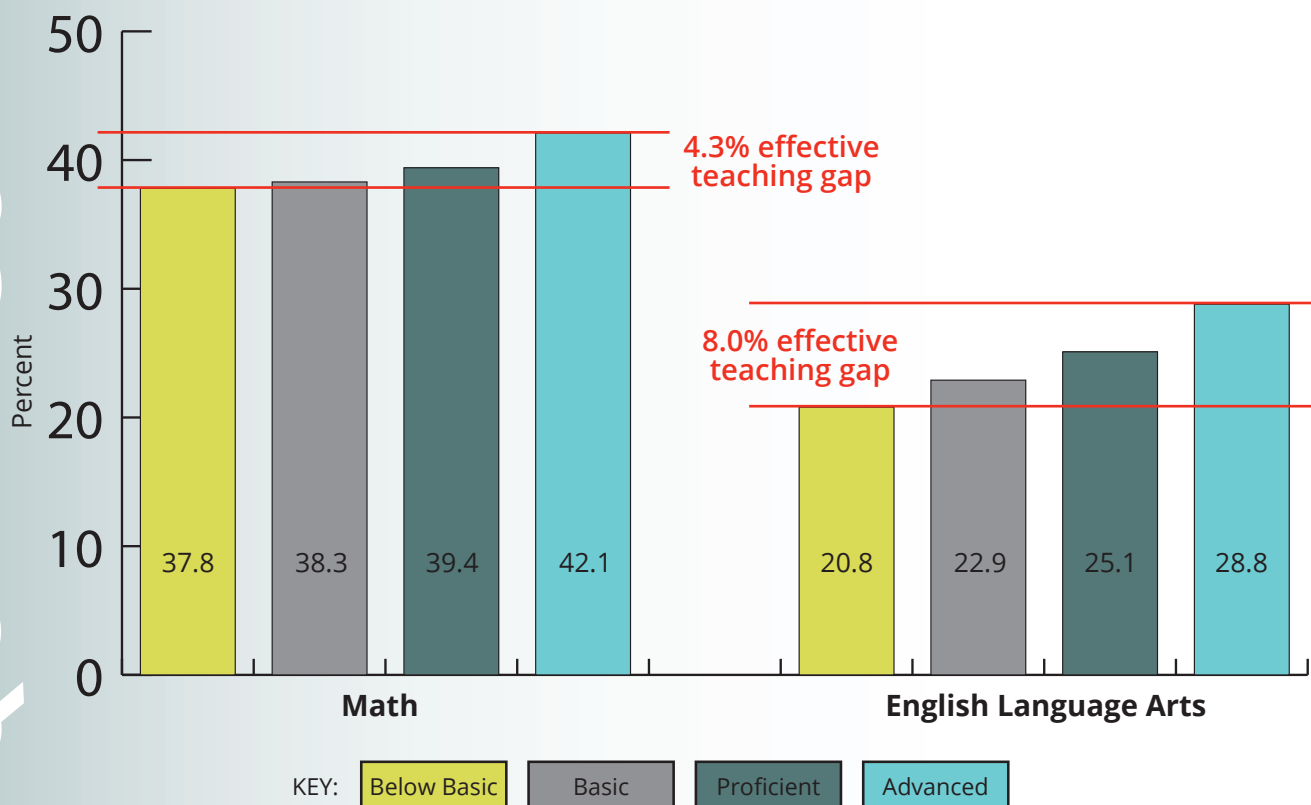
Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

As leaders, we acknowledge implicit bias in ourselves and our teachers and work to create an inclusive environment and provide supports to help educators improve and differentiate instruction for all students.

In Tennessee, 4-8 grade students below proficiency in English Language Arts were 8 percent less likely to be placed with a highly effective teacher in 2016.[19]

Percent (y-axis: 0 to 50)

Math
- Below Basic: 37.8
- Basic: 38.3
- Proficient: 39.4
- Advanced: 42.1

4.3% effective teaching gap

English Language Arts
- Below Basic: 20.8
- Basic: 22.9
- Proficient: 25.1
- Advanced: 28.8

8.0% effective teaching gap

KEY: Below Basic | Basic | Proficient | Advanced

[19] 2016 Tennessee Human Capital Data Report.

Recommended Actions
for providing equitable access to effective teachers

School Leader Actions

- Use the Human Capital Data Report (preferably multi-year trend data) to assist with student-teacher placements, specifically by using data to schedule highly effective teachers with the lowest performing students
- Analyze multi-year data to develop strategies for recruiting and hiring highly effective teachers in the most high-need grades/areas of the school
- Create strong professional learning plans to address the needs of struggling teachers
- Develop a new teacher support program to provide needed support to induct and retain highly effective teachers in high-need schools and classrooms
- Utilize TVAAS and observation data with teacher evaluation conferences and consider strategies to improve learning gains for struggling students
- Integrate effective teaching gap (ETG) goals into the school improvement plan and report annually on Human Capital Report data to measure improvements

District Leader Actions

- Review the annual Human Capital Data Report, and develop strategies to recruit and place highly effective teachers in the schools, grades, and content areas most in need
- Examine other barriers (e.g., school conditions, school leadership, etc.) to attracting highly qualified teachers to the most high-need schools, and develop a plan for removing barriers identified
- Utilize the Human Capital Data Report during evaluation conferences with school administrators to inform school improving planning and evaluation outcomes.
- Train school leaders and interview teams in selection and hiring practices to reduce bias and increase the use of skill demonstration and evidenced based practices in the interview process.
- Develop or strengthen partnerships with primary EPPs that include sharing data on performance and teacher effectiveness, student placement needs, etc.
- Partner with EPPs to train preservice teachers effectively and build their skill sets around equity, cultural competence, and RTI[2]
- Provide ongoing training and support for all teachers in cultural competence and working with diverse student populations

School Board Actions

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

Community Actions

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

Recruit and Retain a Diverse Teaching Force

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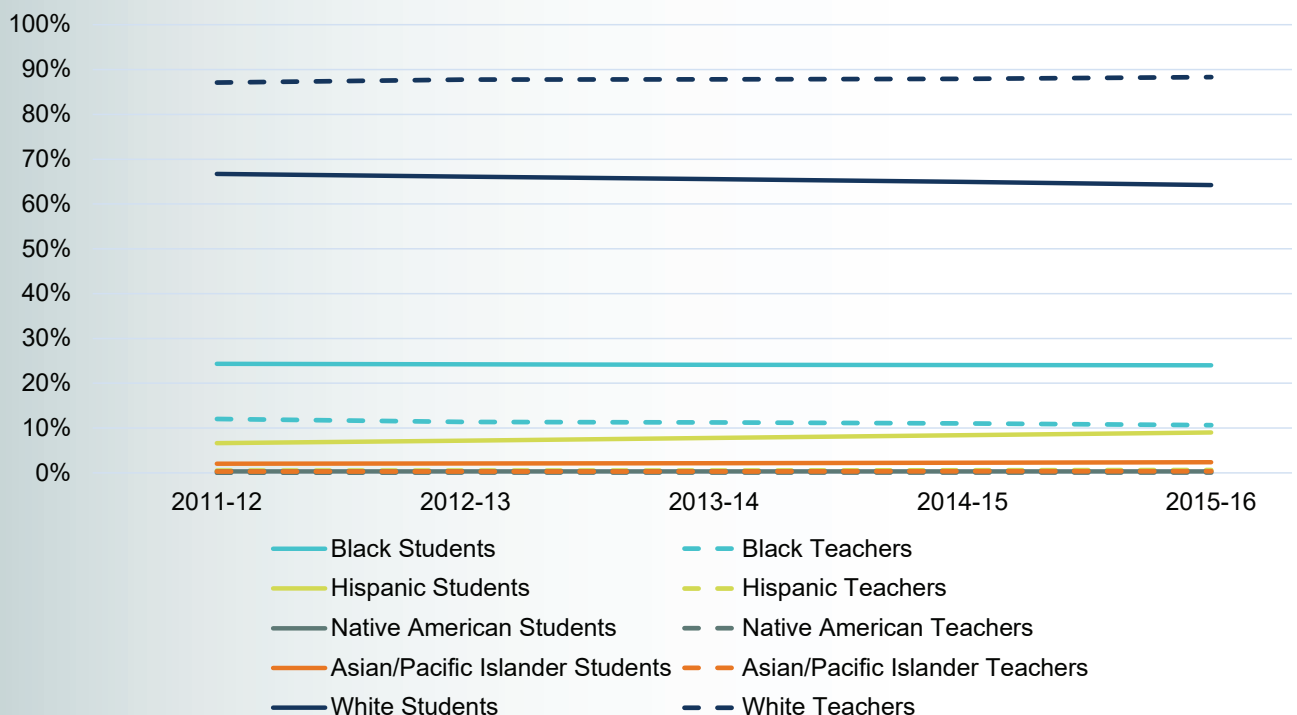
Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

As leaders, we work to acknowledge that students benefit from seeing teachers who look like themselves and address implicit bias when hiring, assigning, developing, and retaining teachers of color.

In Tennessee, Black students represented 24 percent of the total student population, but only 10 percent of the total teacher population was Black in 2015-16.[20]

Legend:
- Black Students — Black Teachers
- Hispanic Students — Hispanic Teachers
- Native American Students — Native American Teachers
- Asian/Pacific Islander Students — Asian/Pacific Islander Teachers
- White Students — White Teachers

[20] Goldstein, Lila K.S. *Diversity of Students' Teachers and Classmates*. PowerPoint. March 21, 2017.

Recommended Actions
for recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching force

School Leader Actions

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

District Leader Actions

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

School Board Actions

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

Community Actions

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

EQUITY COMMITMENT FIVE

Embed Cultural Competence in All Aspects of School Practices

6

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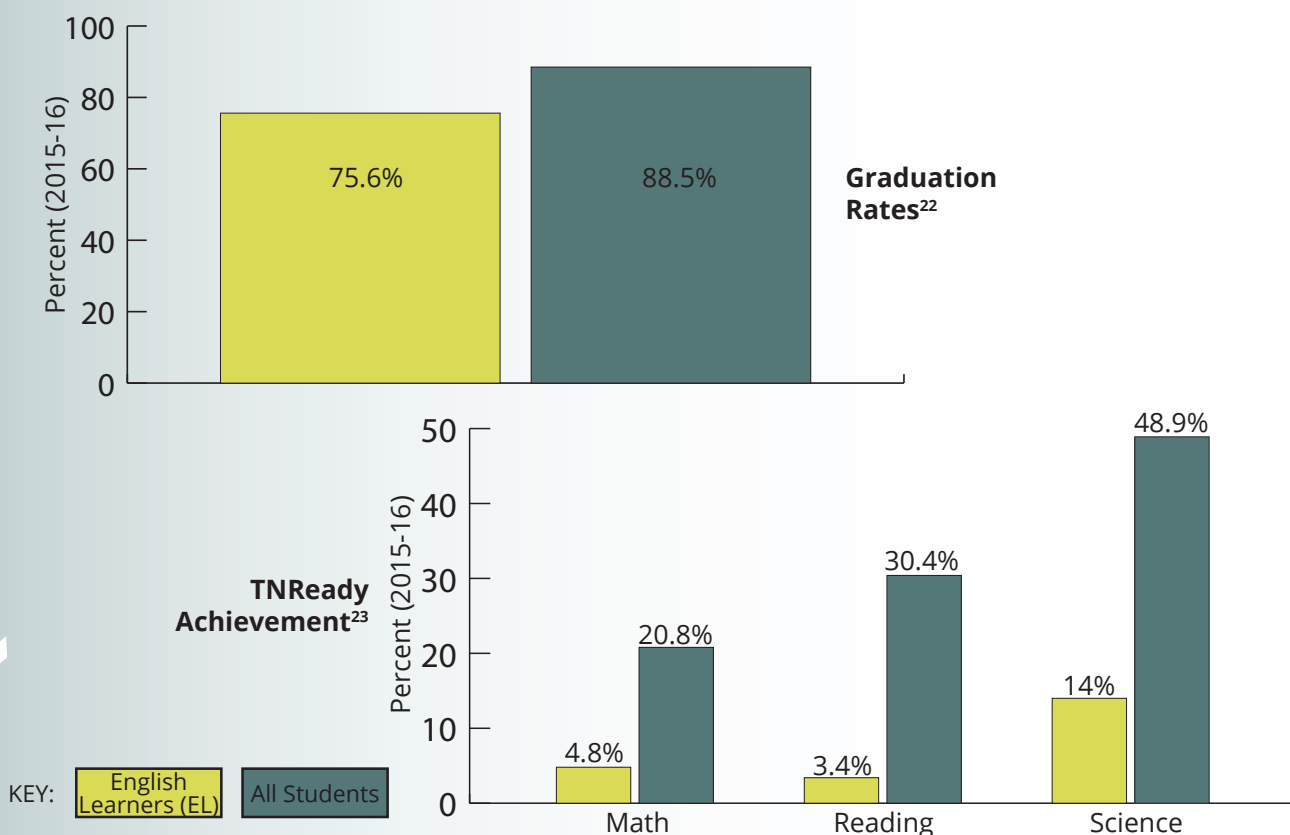
Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

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

In Tennessee, 56,528 students are English Learners. Only 14 percent of high school English Learners were proficient or advanced in science as compared to 48.9 percent of all students in 2016.[21]

Percent (2015-16)

75.6% 88.5%

Graduation Rates[22]

TNReady Achievement[23]

Percent (2015-16)

48.9%

30.4%

20.8%

14%

4.8% 3.4%

Math   Reading   Science

KEY: English Learners (EL)   All Students

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

Recommended Actions
for embedding cultural competence in all aspects of school practices

School Leader Actions

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

District Leader Actions

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

School Board Actions

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

Community Actions

- Utilize bilingual liaisons and community leaders, both formal and informal, to create cultural bridges between the school and the community
- Develop advisory councils or parent/family groups within schools
- Develop a calendar of events or programs tied to curricular themes and events in the school

Partner with Community Allies

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

7

Common Misconception

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

Equity Mindset

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

The Tennessee Promise scholarship program provides students with two years of tuition-free attendance at a community or technical college in Tennessee.[24] Almost half of the first TNPromise class dropped out of college without a degree in 2017.[25]
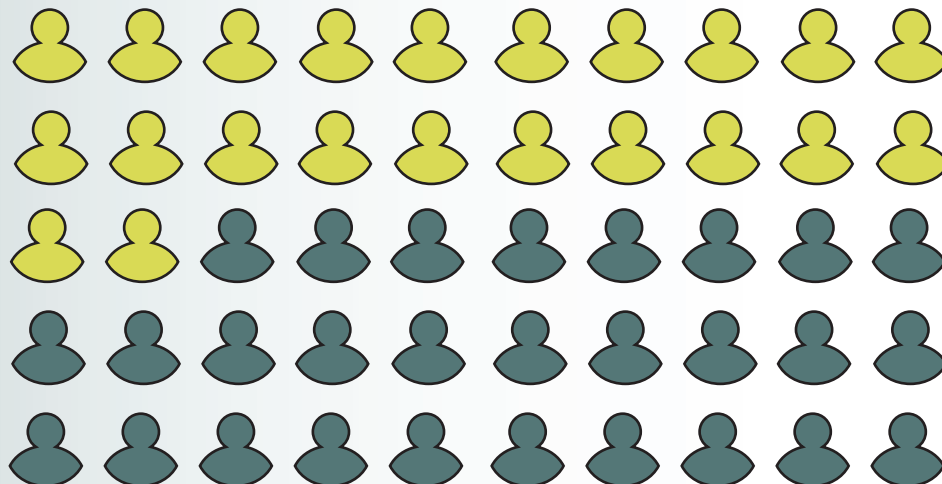
[24] Tennessee Promise. http://tnpromise.gov/
[25] Tennessean. "Tennessee Promise students more likely to succeed in college, less likely to drop out, new data shows," Sept. 21, 2017. https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2017/09/21/tennessee-promise-students-more-likely-succeed-college-less-likely-drop-out-new-data-shows/690091001/

Recommended Actions
for partnering with community allies

School Leader Actions

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

District Leader Actions

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

School Board Actions

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

Community Actions

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

EQUITY COMMITMENT SEVEN

Key Terms

Chronic absenteeism: Frequently missing school for any reason (excused, unexcused, suspended/expelled). Commonly defined as missing 10 percent or more of instructional days, the threshold at which research indicates most students are at risk of negative academic and social consequences. *Tennessee Succeeds* includes an accountability framework indicator focused on chronic absenteeism.[26]

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

Cultural competence: Various definitions of this term exist,[27] but generally, the ability to function comfortably in cross-cultural settings and to interact harmoniously with people from cultures and races that differ from one's own.[28]

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in December 2015, reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Tennessee's ESSA plan can be found here.

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

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

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

Ready Graduate Indicator: As proposed in Tennessee's ESSA plan, this indicator is calculated as follows:
- Graduation rate multiplied by the percentage of ready graduates
- A ready graduate meets *one* of the following criteria (students can only be "counted" once):
  - score a 21 or higher on the ACT, OR
  - complete four EPSOs, OR
  - complete two EPSOs + earn an industry certification (on a CTE pathway leading to a credential), OR
  - complete two EPSOs + score a designated score TBD on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT)

Restorative practices: Restorative practices are processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.[29]

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

Service learning: Community engagement that combines learning goals and community service in ways that can enhance both student growth and the common good.[30]

Tennessee Succeeds: Tennessee's strategic plan that drives toward the vision that districts and schools will exemplify excellence and equity such that all students have the knowledge and skills to successfully embark upon their chosen path in life.

Truancy: A legal term that refers only to unexcused absences. A Tennessee student is considered truant at five unexcused absences and may be subject to legal intervention.[31]

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

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[26] Tennessee Department of Education's Chronically Out of School FAQ. https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/chronic-absenteeism.html
[27] National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University. https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html
[28] Cultural Competence and Equity, Minneapolis Public Schools. http://sss.mpls.k12.mn.us/sites/6c9fd336-96c5-451c-a8a6-b6f00373668d/uploads/Section_F_Cult_Comp.pdf
[29] International Institute for Restorative Practices. https://www.iirp.edu/who-we-are/what-is-restorative-practices
[30] Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/
[31] Tennessee Department of Education's Chronically Out of School FAQ. https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/chronic-absenteeism.html

Contributions and Acknowledgments

The Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook was developed by the Tennessee ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC) working group, comprised of:

> "In the struggle to create great schools for all students, equity often rides at the back of the bus. The *Tennessee Leaders Equity Playbook* provides a powerful framework to change that dynamic. It is an especially thoughtful and actionable tool to bring equity to center stage in classrooms and schools.
> — Dr. Joseph F. Murphy, Associate Dean, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University
>
> School leaders are ultimately the voice of equity and they determine if equity will be discussed in a whisper or communicated with a megaphone. The *Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook* is a tool to help school leaders find their voice so they can systematically talk about and design equitable solutions for all their student needs.
> — Dr. Candice McQueen, Tennessee Commissioner of Education
>
> Because principals play a crucial role in attracting and retaining excellent teachers, as well as in turning around troubled schools, supporting their work is an important part of achieving equity for all students.
> — Jody Spiro, Ed.D., Director, Education Leadership, The Wallace Foundation"