



tn educational equity coalition

2019 POLICY AGENDA

The Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition is a group of diverse civil rights and education advocacy organizations that seek to address chronic disparities in achievement and opportunities for students of color, as well as those learning English, living with a disability, or in poverty in the state of Tennessee. We engage educators, parents, community leaders and policymakers alike to take collective action to address inequities that have real implications for students, and dramatic consequences for their ability to thrive in college, careers and life.

The Equity Coalition has four key policy priority areas and corresponding recommendations that we believe will lead to improved outcomes for every student in Tennessee, and can serve as a guide for policymakers and advocates in Tennessee in 2019.



PRIORITY 1: *Excellent Teachers and Leaders for Every Child*

We believe that every student deserves a passionate and highly effective teacher and that we must do more to develop a pipeline of well-trained, highly compensated and appropriately supported teachers who reflect the communities they serve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve educator quality in Tennessee, with a focus on:

- Recruiting and retaining an educator workforce that reflects the racial and ethnic background of students in our state
- Increasing access to strong teachers and leaders for historically underserved students



PRIORITY 2: *Strong Accountability Systems*

Over the past decade Tennessee sent a clear signal to districts and schools that they must raise achievement for all groups of students, and must make more progress for groups of students who are behind. We believe that our accountability system, the Tennessee Succeeds ESSA State Plan, is a powerful tool for improving opportunity and achievement for all students by highlighting schools that are exceeding expectations, but also sending a strong signal when schools or students fall behind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue Tennessee's commitment to school and district accountability under the Tennessee Succeeds ESSA plan, which includes the following:

- **Maintaining high expectations** through rigorous standards and aligned assessments
- **Develop a comprehensive plan**, with educator input, for successfully implementing TNReady
- Ensuring there is **transparent, accessible and disaggregated reporting** on annual student and school performance
- Providing strong **oversight and comprehensive supports for school improvement** for the state's lowest performing schools, with expectations for community engagement in the process



PRIORITY 3: *Appropriate and Equitable Resources*

Although Tennessee has made important progress in recent years, many students remain behind because of the inadequate and inequitable allocation of resources to their schools. While increased funding for education in Tennessee is necessary, it is the deployment of those dollars that matters most. Tennessee must ensure that districts evaluate inequities not only between schools, but also within schools, and between groups of students within those schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure there is an equitable and appropriate distribution of resources to districts and schools, with a focus on:

- Increasing **access to rigorous, grade-level instruction and materials** across all schools in Tennessee with corresponding teacher training and support
- Providing resources, training and expectations to reduce **the rates of chronic absenteeism and school discipline disparities**
- Addressing **unique education challenges in rural communities**, including: lack of adequate broadband connectivity, limited access to advanced or early post-secondary courses, and low college enrollment and completion



PRIORITY 4: *Successful Outcomes in Postsecondary Access and Completion*

Tennesseans know that a postsecondary education is a stepping stone to increased social mobility and financial security. The imperative is clear, yet our current postsecondary system has fallen short for specific populations in our state. To ensure an increase in postsecondary attainment for *all*, a deliberate focus on the part of state leaders, postsecondary institutions, and stakeholders is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promote postsecondary success for all Tennesseans, with a focus on:

- Researching and implementing policies that **improve the academic preparation of all students** before entering postsecondary education
- Leverage funding and technical assistance to tackle **remaining college affordability challenges** in Tennessee
- Working with colleges and universities to **increase the number of highly-qualified college advisors** to promote individual student success
- **Expanding access to postsecondary education** for incarcerated persons by lifting ineligibility statutes regarding state financial aid, and for undocumented high school graduates by creating access to in-state tuition rates

WHO WE ARE

The Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition is a group of diverse civil rights and education advocacy organizations that have built a shared policy agenda to address chronic disparities in achievement and opportunities for students of color in the state of Tennessee.

Our members include 2,180 individual advocates representing more than 525 national, state and local organizations and over 70 partner organizations across the state. Our robust network of allies spans multiple sectors and includes students, parents, school-level personnel, district-level leaders, policymakers, non-profit leaders, governmental organizations, and advocates in the K-postsecondary sectors.

The Coalition was formed in the spring of 2016 and is convened by Conexión Americas, a long-standing Nashville-based nonprofit that serves the Latino community.

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Visit our website to learn more about becoming a member of the Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition or to sign up for an event.



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