

TENNESSEE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY COALITION

Policy Agenda

JUNE 2018

OVERVIEW

Our policy agenda includes four priorities, with recommendations updated during our annual Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition Summit. These policy priorities drive the work of the Coalition and are guided by research based practices that have the potential to yield promising results by **closing achievement, access and opportunity gaps for historically underserved students in Tennessee.**



PRIORITY 1: EXCELLENT TEACHERS AND LEADERS FOR EVERY CHILD

Every student deserves passionate and highly effective teachers and leaders throughout their educational careers. It is critical to develop a pipeline of well-trained, highly compensated, and appropriately supported educators who reflect the students they serve.

BACKGROUND

- In Tennessee, 85 percent of the teacher candidates enrolled in institutions of higher education in 2017 were white.¹
- Students of color enrolled in K-12 are disproportionately and historically underserved academically—this manifests itself throughout the postsecondary pipeline.
- Teachers of color are recruited and hired at lower rates than their white peers, and lack of support, low pay, and isolation make teachers of color more transient within districts.²
- Teachers and leaders of color tend to leak from the pipeline during five key points:
 - (1) postsecondary enrollment;
 - (2) enrollment in education programs;
 - (3) postsecondary completion;
 - (4) entering the workforce; and
 - (5) teacher retention.³

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Recruit and retain a racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce
- ✓ Increase access to highly effective educators for historically underserved students



PRIORITY 2: STRONG ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

We must use levers in state and federal policy to set clear expectations that our education system should raise achievement for all students, and not just some. We must ensure all conversations are student centered, data is transparently reported, and schools act promptly, and within regulation, to improve.

BACKGROUND

- Schools must publish clear and easy-to-find annual public report cards about school and student achievement differentiated by student subgroups/categories.
- The groups identified by Tennessee are: Black/ Hispanic/Native American (BHN), economically disadvantaged (ED), English learners (EL), and students with disabilities (SWD).⁴
- The Tennessee Succeeds ESSA State Plan is the amalgamation of the 2015 Tennessee Succeeds strategic plan, ESSA federal requirements, and stakeholder feedback.⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Continue annual statewide testing of students
- ✓ Report data in a clear, transparent, accessible and timely way; disaggregated by student subgroups
- ✓ Implement the Tennessee Succeeds ESSA State Plan with fidelity and with a continued commitment to equity
- ✓ Ensure community engagement in school improvement



PRIORITY 3: APPROPRIATE AND EQUITABLE RESOURCES

A strong community provides every student with equitable access to and support for a quality education throughout a student's educational career. Schools and districts, in partnership with community stakeholders, must focus on providing services that eliminate achievement, discipline and opportunity gaps for our state's most underserved students.

BACKGROUND

- High poverty, rural schools have the highest principal turnover in the state at 18 percent.⁶
- Rural schools have unique challenges such as lack of broadband internet access and transportation issues due to extreme remoteness and geographic isolation.
- 17 percent of black students and 10 percent of Hispanic students were considered chronically absent in the 2014-15 school year.⁷
- Ninth graders who miss more than 11 days of school are half as likely to score a 21 or higher on their ACT than their peers that are not chronically absent.⁸
- Approximately 5,000 students per day are absent due to exclusionary discipline and approximately 36 percent of students who "violate school rules" receive out-of-school suspensions.⁹
- In the 2016-17 school year, black students made up 24.1 percent of the student population but 41 percent of suspensions and 40 percent of expulsions.¹⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Address the unique opportunity gaps and challenges faced by rural communities
- ✓ Reduce the rate of chronic absenteeism among our students with the highest needs
- ✓ Reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices by training teachers and leaders



PRIORITY 4: SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES IN ACCESS AND COMPLETION

Research shows that more than any other factor, postsecondary education is associated with higher earning potential, healthier lives, and greater access to financial stability. The reality, however, is that often, students of color and economically disadvantaged students have the least amount of access to higher education.

BACKGROUND

- In the 2015-16 school year, students of color made up only 27 percent of enrollment at public institutions and 21 percent of degrees attained.¹¹
- There are approximately 23,000 Dreamers across the state that are college-going age, or will graduate from high school in Tennessee in the next four years.¹²
- Pursuing and completing a college degree is unattainable for many of these students due to cost of tuition, and additional college expenses.
- According to 2016 data from the Prison Policy Initiative, almost 60,000 people are incarcerated across local jails, state prisons, and federal prisons in Tennessee.¹³
- Inmates with access to high-quality correctional education - including postsecondary education - are 43% less likely to return to prison within three years compared to peers.¹⁴
- For programs that offer educational programs for inmates to earn degrees, recidivism rates can drop as low as 2 percent, compared to 50 percent nationally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Ensure access to rigorous curricula and early postsecondary opportunities for underserved students in high school
- ✓ Ensure access to effective high school counselors that have been trained and regularly participate in implicit bias training
- ✓ Report data in a clear, transparent, accessible way; Ensure student data is disaggregated by subgroups
- ✓ Pursue and promote affordability to institutions of higher education by reducing financial barriers for underserved students
- ✓ Invest in high quality correctional education

ENDNOTES

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- 12) What exactly are we citing here? Pew Hispanic Center. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/data-and-resources/>
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