ESSA: The Tennessee Plan & Chronic Absenteeism

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Conexión Américas

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Goals for this Session

• Review Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition
  – Priorities & ESSA Engagement Strategy
• Review Tennessee’s ESSA plan & the Chronically Out of School Indicator
• Discuss Metro Nashville Public School’s approach to addressing Chronic Absenteeism
• Discuss strategies for engagement and learning at the local and state level
Who are we?

www.tnedequity.org

tn educational equity coalition
What do we mean by Equity?
Our 3 Policy Priorities

• Priority 1: Excellent Teachers and Leaders for Every Child

• Priority 2: Strong Accountability Systems

• Priority 3: Appropriate and Equitable Resources
Student Demographics in Tennessee

% of Population - 997,893

- All Students
- African-American
- Economically Disadvantaged
- English Learners
- Latino
- Students with Disabilities
- White

Economically Disadvantaged: 33%
African-American: 20%
Latino: 10%
Students with Disabilities: 40%
White: 60%
All Students: 100%
Demographic Growth in TN

Figure 2. Race and Ethnicity of Tennessee's Children

Student Achievement Data in TN

Percentage of Students who Score Proficient or Advanced on Annual Testing

- 3-8 ELA
- 3-8 Math
- English II
- Algebra 1

White  Latino  Af-American
Why should we care about ESSA?

- ESSA was a bipartisan bill signed into law in December, 2015.
- ESSA is fundamentally a civil rights law.
- ESSA allows us an opportunity to ensure all students are treated equitably.

- The impact ESSA will have on students will depend on the involvement and advocacy of community members.
- It is our collective responsibility to remain engaged as the state plan moves into implementation.
# Tennessee ESSA Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kick-off</th>
<th>Stakeholder Input</th>
<th>Writing the Plan</th>
<th>Stakeholder Feedback</th>
<th>Approving the Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Stakeholders included** directors of schools, principals, educators, parents and students, legislators, governor’s office, state board of education, school board members, CORE offices, community organizations, and advocacy groups.

Equity Coalition ESSA Engagement

- First meeting with TDOE
  - MAY 2016
- Coalition members selected for state ESSA working groups
  - JUNE 2016
- Steering Committee meets with Secretary of Education John King
  - JULY 2016
- Launch of ESSA Bootcamp Series
  - DEC. 2016
- Coalition submits comments to USED: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
  - MAY 2017
- Coalition submits letters to Senator Lamar Alexander and Commissioner Candice McQueen
- Op-ed in response to draft version state plan
ESSA: What do states have to measure?

States have to rate schools based on the following indicators, all of which have to be disaggregated by student group:

1. Academic Achievement
   - Proficiency on annual assessments, as measured against state-set gap-closing goals

2. Other Academic Indicator
   - For high schools – graduation rate
   - For k-8 – growth or another valid and statewide academic indicator

3. Progress toward English language proficiency for English learners

4. Additional statewide indicator of school quality or student success
ESSA & the Additional Indicator

ESSA requires states to include in their accountability framework “not less than one indicator of school quality” which is an additional way, beyond test scores, to assess how well their school is serving students.

Specifically, ESSA requires that this additional indicator:

- allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance
- is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide
- may include one or more measures
Possible Examples of Additional Indicators of School Quality

- Access to and completion of advanced coursework
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Measures of college/career readiness
- School Climate
- School Discipline
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Student Engagement
- Teacher Absenteeism
What did we advocate for?

1. **Careful selection of Indicators:**
   - Must be able to disaggregate the data for each student group
   - Must be able to differentiate between schools and districts
   - Must be aligned to post-secondary readiness and academic outcomes
   - Must send a clear signal to schools about the priorities of the state
   - Must trigger actions by school personnel and the allocation of resources to ensure all students succeed on the metric

2. **Chronic Absenteeism & an Opportunity Metric tied to access to college and career readiness**
What is Chronic Absenteeism?

The Tennessee Definition of Chronically Absent:

• When a student misses 18 or more days (or 10%) of school in one academic year

• An absence is defined as missing school for any reason, including excused or unexcused absences, or suspensions.
Implications for Accountability

Benefits

- Chronic absenteeism has strong correlations with achievement and graduation rates. It matters for student success.
- The measure is relevant to all grades.
- Absenteeism is something that schools/districts don’t always feel responsible for. Including it in accountability would send clear signal that they have a role to play in improving student attendance.

Risks

- May be easily gameable.
- May create undue pressure or blame on students who are chronically absent.
- Can be seen as index for poverty, creating disproportionate pressure on schools with high numbers of students living in poverty
- May create system of informal or off the record suspension or disciplinary systems
Chronic Absenteeism & Achievement

- Chronic Kindergarten Absence Associated with Lower 1st Grade Achievement for all children
- Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten & 1st Grade Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade
- Students who are chronically absent score proficient or advanced on TCAP tests at much lower rates than their peers.
- Chronically Absent 6th Graders Have Lower Graduation Rate
- 9th Grade Attendance Predicts Graduation for Students of All Economic Backgrounds
Why Chronic Absenteeism?

- **Exposure to Language**: School exposes children to language-rich environments they may not have at home.
- **Time on Task**: Students who miss too much school fall behind and have a hard time catching up.
- **Persistence**: Good attendance builds habits, essential for success in school and life.
- **Engagement**: Attendance indicates an engaged student; absences can signal disengagement.
- **Classroom Churn**: Too many students missing too many days slow down classroom instruction and affect school climate.
- **School Funding**: In states where funding depends on enrollment, good attendance pays.

### Why Chronic Absenteeism?

**EVERY DAY, NEARLY 150,000 STUDENTS IN TENNESSEE ARE NOT IN SCHOOL.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4th Graders</th>
<th>9th Graders</th>
<th>12th Graders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE-K Students</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Students</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**WHO IS CHRONICALLY OUT OF SCHOOL IN TENNESSEE?**
Why Chronic Absenteeism?

### Why Are Students in Tennessee Chronically Absent?

#### Health Issues
- **7%** are absent due to illness or injury
- **16%** of children in TN have chronic health issues
- **140,000** children (ages 0-17) in Tennessee have asthma
- Less than half of all schools in Tennessee have a full-time nurse

#### School Discipline Practices
- **5,000** students are absent every day due to suspension from schools
- **1,794** kindergarten students were either suspended or expelled
- **20%** of 9th graders received a disciplinary infraction
- **64%** of suspensions are of African-American students, who are only 24% of total TN enrollment

#### Poverty
- **15,404** homeless children in Tennessee
- **23.8%** of children under 18 live below the poverty line
Tennessee Succeeds & ESSA Goals

1. Tennessee will rank in the top half of states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by 2019.

2. 75 percent of Tennessee third graders will be proficient in reading by 2025.

3. The average ACT composite score in Tennessee will be a 21 by 2020.

4. The majority of high school graduates from the class of 2020 will earn a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree.

Tennessee Succeeds & ESSA Priorities

- **Early Foundations & Literacy**
  Building skills in early grades to contribute to future success

- **High School & Bridge to Postsecondary**
  Preparing significantly more students for postsecondary completion

- **All Means All**
  Providing individualized support and opportunities for all students with a focus on those who are furthest behind

- **Educator Support**
  Supporting the preparation and development of an exceptional educator workforce

- **District Empowerment**
  Providing districts with the tools and autonomy they need to make the best decisions for students

K-8 Schools

Starting with data from 2017-18, all schools that pass the minimum performance goal will receive a letter grade based on the performance of all students and historically underserved student groups in the following areas.

- Chronically Out of School: 10%
- ELPA: 10%
- Achievement: 45%
- Growth: 35%

High Schools

(Schools that serve grade 12)

- Chronically Out of School: 10%
- ELPA: 10%
- Ready Graduate: 25%
- Achievement: 30%
- Growth: 25%

Except for growth, all indicators provide schools two opportunities to show success, through either absolute performance or growth in school performance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- All schools should have the opportunity to earn an “A”
- All means all
- All growth should be rewarded
- Reporting should be transparent
How will Chronic Absenteeism be measured in the TN plan?

Under the Tennessee’s ESSA plan, every school will receive a rating based on the percentage of students who are chronically out of school due to any type of absence.

**Schools** can demonstrate performance using one of two pathways:

1) **Absolute Performance Pathway**: the % of students who are chronically out of school, relative to other schools

2) **Performance against an Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) target** in reducing the percent of students chronically out of school
How will Chronic Absenteeism be measured in the TN plan?

District-Level Accountability

**Districts** will also receive a rating based on one of two pathways:

1) **The Absolute Performance Pathway**
2) **The AMO target**
3) **Value-Added Pathway** utilizing a student-level comparison from year to year, and then setting a goals for improvement in attendance
Where are we now?

- Tennessee submitted the final ESSA State Plan on April 3rd.
- The Tennessee plan entered a period of federal review by the U.S. Department of Education and goes into implementation at the beginning of school year 2017-2018.
- The first round of school grades under ESSA will be released in December 2018.
Featured Presenter

Brad Redmond
Coordinator of Student Services Performance Data
Student Support Services
Metro Nashville Public Schools
What will we be watching in implementation?

- Districts must develop robust data collection and monitoring systems for chronic absenteeism
- Establishment of accurate school level attendance procedures
- Strong oversight on practices for enrollment and withdrawal of students
- Ensuring that attendance history is not a factor in enrollment decisions
- Processes for dropping or withdrawing students without proper intervention or notification
Overview of Attendance Services

The mission of Support Services is to support the whole child by improving the conditions of learning while helping ALL students and their families overcome life’s challenges.
The Scope of the Problem
2012-2017 MNPS Student Attendance Data

- 2013-2014: 15.0%
- 2014-2015: 15.2%
- 2015-2016: 15.6%
- 2016-2017: 16.9%
The Scope of the Problem

2016-2017 MNPS Chronic Absence by Grade Level

- District Total: 16.9%
- 12th Grade: 27.7%
- 11th Grade: 25.8%
- 10th Grade: 21.3%
- 9th Grade: 15.7%
- 8th Grade: 12.6%
- 7th Grade: 12.1%
- 6th Grade: 10.6%
- 5th Grade: 11.0%
- 4th Grade: 10.9%
- 3rd Grade: 12.7%
- 2nd Grade: 13.3%
- 1st Grade: 15.7%
- K: 25.2%
- P4: 25.7%
- P3: 25.7%
### The Scope of the Problem

**Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced Based on Attendance**

- **Math**
  - Elementary: 28.1%
  - Middle: 30.4%
  - High: 23.1%

- **RLA**
  - Elementary: 29.9%
  - Middle: 28.8%
  - High: 26.4%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>RLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Achievement Gap >20% in both subject areas across all tiers*

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Students can’t learn if they aren’t in school.
Understanding the Progression of Truancy Intervention

3 Tier Approach to Attendance Intervention

- **Legal Intervention**: A small fraction of student body
  - Students with severe chronic absence and/or truancy
  - Students with chronic absence or truancy over multiple years

- **Early Intervention**: Reducing barriers to attendance
  - Students at risk, or in the early stages, of chronic absence and/or truancy

- **Prevention**: Establishing expectations and positive school climate
  - School-wide strategy to promote & encourage regular daily attendance
  - All students

Students with chronic absence or truancy over multiple years

Some students

All students
### Strategy: Recognize Good & Improved Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School communities can send a clear message that going to school every day is a priority by providing regular recognition and rewards to students and families who have good and improved attendance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy: Engage Students & Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance improves when a school community offers a warm and welcoming environment that engages students and families and offers enriching learning opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy: Monitor Attendance Data & Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Data Analysis and Tools**
The best way to identify students with poor attendance is to calculate the data that schools are already collecting. In addition to looking at school-wide averages, as most schools do, shift the data to see how many students are missing 10 percent of the school year. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance Teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each school should have a team in place that meets regularly to review the school’s attendance data and coordinate efforts to reduce chronic absence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy: Provide Personalized Early Outreach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps the most critical strategy is using data to trigger early caring outreach to families and students who are already missing too many days of school. Outreach is essential for identifying barriers to attendance — hunger, health, shelter, transportation or other challenges — and the supports or resources that would help improve attendance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Understanding the Progression of Truancy Intervention

#### Tier I - Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enforcing Laws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Intervention:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing barriers to attendance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing expectations and positive school climate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis Tools

Attendance Dashboard

16-17 All (District)

# Active Students (Primary): 86,325

District Summary

Overall Attendance: 94.0%

Chronic Absence: 16.9%

Satisfactory (80% Present): 56.6%

Perfect Attendance (100% Present): 4.7%

Chronic Absence Categories %


Gender: F: 55, M: 54

Chronic Absence Categories:

- P3: 175
- P4: 778
- K: 141
- 1: 941
- 2: 871
- 3: 781
- 4: 753
- 5: 704
- 6: 782
- 7: 756
- 8: 900
- 9: 1,311
- 10: 1,450
- 11: 1,444
- 12: 1,804
- Total: 14,582

Chronic Absence Repeaters:

- # of Students: 6,215

Absence Distribution:

1. U-AbsUnexc 84%
2. X-BusUnexc 2%
3. Z-Fixed 2%
4. A-ExcExc 28%
5. To Chronic Absence Repeaters
6. Q-TBusExcAb 3%
7. N-Exc 0%

Data starts from year 2007-2008. Years may not be consecutive.

C.A.R.E.
"All Day. Every Day."
### Understanding the Progression of Truancy Intervention

#### Tier II - Early Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Parent/Student Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-2 Unexcused Absences</td>
<td>Teachers talk to students and inquire about absences.</td>
<td>Ask students to bring note from home to explain absence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 Unexcused Absences</td>
<td>Teachers make personal contact with parent(s) and document on S&amp;I page in the Student Management System.</td>
<td>Call, email, or parent to inquire about absences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3     | 4-6 Unexcused Absences | Teacher refers students with 4+ unexcused absences to School Attendance Team  
5 Day Letter Notification is mailed home | School Attendance Team will work with parents and the student to develop a Student Attendance Plan. |
| 4     | 7+ Unexcused Absences | Attendance Designee and School Attendance Team will begin to prepare documentation for a *Truancy Petition*. | Attendance Designee and School Attendance Team will further investigate truancy and determine proper student intervention and resources for parents. |

#### Prevention:

*Establishing expectations and positive school climate*

#### Early Intervention:

*Reducing barriers to attendance*

#### Legal Intervention:

*Enforcing Laws*
I. Questions for Students

- Do your parents know that you’re missing school?
- What are the challenges interfering with you coming to school every day?
- Where are you when you’re missing school?
- Who are you with when you’re missing school?
- What are you doing when out of school?
- How do you get to school?
- What would help you to attend school regularly?
- Are you involved with any school activities, clubs, or sports?

II. Questions for Parents

- What are the challenges interfering with your child coming to school every day?
- What, if any, family issues impact your child’s attendance?
- What, if any, are the school issues impacting your child’s attendance?
- Are there any transportation issues impacting your child’s attendance?
- Are there any medical issues impacting your child’s attendance?
- Are there any social/emotional issues impacting your child’s attendance?
- What would help your child to attend school regularly?
- Does your child describe a fear or dislike of school? If yes,
### Understanding the Progression of Truancy Intervention

#### Tier II - Early Intervention

**Truancy Screening Form**

#### III. Findings

Please indicate the risk factors contributing to the truancy of this student. Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Other:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Fear of a bully or of being teased</td>
<td>☐ Peer pressure (their friends are skipping school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Dislike/disinterest in school/lack of direction</td>
<td>☐ The feeling of being treated unfairly by school staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Academic frustration and failure</td>
<td>☐ Drug use/abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The idea that they have better things to do</td>
<td>☐ Potential emotional or mental health problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Problems at home</td>
<td>☐ Transportation issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Medical issues</td>
<td>☐ Other:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Information (Optional):**

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**Legal Intervention:**
- *Enforcing Laws*

**Early Intervention:**
- *Reducing barriers to attendance*

**Prevention:**
- *Establishing expectations and positive school climate*
What are cluster support teams?

Each of the 12 school clusters within MNPS has a Cluster Support Team. It exists to encourage student attendance, support social and emotional learning, and produce excellent academic achievement within a safe and nurturing environment. The Cluster Support Team is comprised of professionals from the Department of Support Services.
Cluster Support Team Members

- Truancy Intervention Specialist
- School Social Workers
- Behavior Analyst
- School Counselors
## Understanding the Progression of Truancy Intervention

### Tier III - Legal Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Parent/Student Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10+ Unexcused Absences</td>
<td>Attendance Designee will consult with School Attendance Team and school level administrators to determine students who will be petitioned to Juvenile Court.</td>
<td>Attendance Designee will work with MNPS Court Liaison and Juvenile Court staff to notify students and guardians to appear in court.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### C.A.R.E.

**Connecting Attendance to Results in Education**

“All Day. Every Day.”

Legal Intervention: *Enforcing Laws*

Early Intervention: *Reducing barriers to attendance*

Prevention: *Establishing expectations and positive school climate*
Questions

C.A.R.E.
Connecting Attendance to Results in Education

“All Day. Every Day.”
What will we be watching in implementation? (continued)

• Suspension practices (unofficial suspensions, marking students as absent, or not documenting and providing proper notification to the parent)
• Eye to pre-k and early elementary suspension practices
• Utilization of inclusionary discipline practices, moving towards restorative practices
• Efforts by the state to supports and train districts
• Efforts to engage partners and families to address chronic absenteeism
What can you do?

Examine chronic absenteeism rates and trends at your local school.
Questions to ask:
• Are there student groups, or grades, that have higher rates of chronic absenteeism?
• Are there trends in the reasons for student absences?
• Are there disproportionate or excessive suspensions occurring at the school?
• What systems are in place now to address absences?

Find out how you can assist with school attendance efforts at your local school.
• Partnerships
• Incentive programs
• Services & Resources
Tennessee Department of Education

Back to School Attendance Toolkit on TDOE Website
• Chronically Out of School FAQ
• Chronically Out of School PowerPoint
• Letter to Parents that includes Attendance Pointers for Parents
• Letter to Teachers with Tips for Talking with Parents.
• Guide to Using Data to Support Student Attendance
• Guiding Questions for Exploring the Data
• Resources

2017 Conditions for Learning Forum
• September 25-26 at the Nashville Sheraton Music City
• Forum will focus on All Means All: Connecting Systems of Support
ESSA Bootcamps

**Memphis**
July 24\(^{th}\) – 9 am – 2 pm
National Civil Rights Museum

**Knoxville**
August 25\(^{th}\) – 9 am – 2 pm
Knoxville Area Urban League

**Chattanooga**
August 29\(^{th}\) – 9 am – 2 pm
Chattanooga State Community College

**Jackson**
September 7\(^{th}\) – 9-2
DoubleTree Hotel
Future ESSA Webinars

Early Post-Secondary Opportunities
Noon CST, August 18, 2017

Rural Districts
Noon CST, Sept. 16, 2017

School Accountability
Noon CST, October 20, 2017

School Improvement
Noon CST, November 17, 2017

Parent Engagement
Noon CST, December 15, 2017

School Funding
Noon, CST, January 19, 2018
Questions?

Please fill out our survey!