



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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The Tennessee Department of Education puts the needs of students first in every aspect of education decision-making and challenges Tennessee educators to be creative in designing programs that make a positive difference for students.

This philosophy was the basis of the 1992 Education Improvement Act (EIA). This law made the state's academic standards among the highest in the nation by mandating accountability for schools and school systems. The department's accountability initiatives focus on student performance and student success. Since 1997-98, every Tennessee school has been required to develop and submit an improvement plan with measurable goals for meeting state and local performance standards.

The EIA gave more control over public education to local communities and completely overhauled the method of distributing state education funds. The Basic Education Program (BEP) funding formula equalizes state funding to a greater extent and provides every child the opportunity for a quality basic education, regardless of where he or she lives.

Governor Phil Bredesen has made education his top priority. During the 104th General Assembly, the Governor's Pre-Kindergarten Initiative received strong support from legislators. They passed legislation to boost spending on pre-k classrooms by \$25 million. He also created the Governor's Task Force on Teacher Pay in 2003, which resulted in a comprehensive legislative package to increase teachers' salaries. Additionally, he has increased funding to improve the use of technology in the classroom and has developed several initiatives to ensure that every child is proficient in reading by the end of third grade.

The assessment program for high school students requires proficiency in subject matter essential for success in the workplace. Beginning with the 2001-02 school year, students entering ninth grade must pass Gateway tests in Algebra I, English II, and Biology I in order to graduate.

The state's annual Report Card, a snapshot of Tennessee's public schools, has become a model for other states where accountability standards are in the forefront of education reform. The Report Card lists achievement scores and gains made annually in Tennessee schools. Results are posted by sub-groups, including ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, English language proficiency, and special education. Based on these data, school goals are developed and addressed in the school improvement plans.

The department is responsible for implementing the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which is designed to ensure that all Tennessee children are proficient or above in reading and math by 2013-14.

Administration

The state Department of Education carries out the day-to-day administration of the state public school system for pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The chief state school officer is the commissioner of education. Appointed by the Governor, the Commissioner serves as a member of the Governor's cabinet and as executive officer of the Department of Education. The Commissioner employs all Department of Education personnel and is responsible for the implementation, administration and enforcement of the laws, regulations, policies, standards, and guidelines for public education in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve.

The Department of Education supervises the allocation of funds appropriated as state and federal aid to public education. For the school year 2004-05, Tennessee's 136 public school systems serve over 1,600 schools and have a combined average membership of 973,626 students. With administrative responsibility for approximately 68,000 teachers, principals, supervisors, and other professional employees, the department spends almost \$6.5 billion in state, federal, and local funds annually.

Organizationally, the department carries out its responsibilities through a central office staff in Andrew Johnson Tower in Nashville and through nine regional Field Service Centers located in Johnson City, Knoxville, Cookeville, Nashville, Lexington, Columbia, Cleveland, Memphis and Martin.

History

The first public school law in Tennessee was passed in 1829 authorizing local taxes for the support of common schools. Tennessee's first constitution made no mention of public education. The second state constitution, adopted in 1835, charged the Tennessee General Assembly with the duty "in all future periods of this Government, to cherish literature and science."

The third state constitution, approved in 1870, placed upon the General Assembly the responsibility for providing a state public school system and of restoring the common school fund.

Tennessee's first state superintendent of public instruction, Colonel Robert H. McEwen, was appointed in 1836. In 1844, the General Assembly abolished the office of state superintendent. From 1844-67, and then from 1870-72, the public schools were under the office of the state treasurer. The Public School Law of 1873 is regarded as the parent act of public education and provided the basic framework for Tennessee's system of public education.

The General Assembly authorized secondary schools in 1891. In 1899, a second act authorized at least one high school to be established in every county. The General Education Act of 1901 provided revenue for the support of all levels of public education from elementary school through college. The act also provided for election of county school boards and provided the first percentage distribution of the school fund to all levels of public education.

In 1913, Tennessee became the first among southern states to enact a compulsory school attendance law. In 1923, the legislature created the Tennessee Department of Education and the Commissioner of Education position. A total of twenty-three educators have served as Commissioner of Education.

Public school laws were recodified in 1925. In 1947, the legislature levied the state's first retail sales tax and allotted 80 percent of the proceeds to the public

schools. Findings of a 1957 survey of K-12 and higher education furnished the guidelines for education during the next two decades.

In 1984, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted the Better Schools Program, which brought Tennessee to the national forefront in education reform. The 1992 EIA renewed the state's position of national leadership in education.

Services

Curriculum and Instruction — Students of all ages take part in instructional programs administered by the department. Kindergarten is mandated for every child, and the emphasis is on developmentally appropriate practices for all grades, elementary and secondary. A major initiative has been implemented to focus on the improvement of reading achievement.

Technology is an integral part of the total school program. The ConnecTEN Internet initiative made Tennessee the first state in the nation to provide Internet connection to all of its public schools and libraries. There is currently an emphasis on incorporating the use of technology seamlessly into the instructional and evaluation process.

At the secondary level, schools are implementing a stronger high school curriculum to ensure that all graduates have the qualifications necessary for either the workplace or post-secondary training at a college, university, or technology center.

Special Instructional Programs — Among the special programs administered by the department are the Governor's Schools of Tennessee—summer residential programs held on college campuses for gifted and talented high school students. In 2005, the Department of Education significantly enriched the Governor's schools by lengthening their terms and providing college coursework credit for students who attend.

Programs for educationally disadvantaged students and others served under the No Child Left Behind Act are administered by the Office of Federal Programs in the department.

The state funds pre-kindergarten education programs for at-risk four-year-olds and parent-involvement programs for their families to help ensure that more children arrive at school ready to learn at a pace with their peers. Governor Bredesen substantially increased funding for pre-kindergarten education in 2005 as part of the state's goal to offer statewide, free and voluntary programs to young children.

The Office of Federal Programs administers Tennessee's safe and drug-free school program. This office designs and funds educational programs to promote the safety and well-being of all students in Tennessee.

Language instruction for limited English-proficient immigrant students is available across the state.

Early Intervention — Federal and state statutes require services for infants and toddlers (from birth through age two) with disabilities along with assistance to their families. The Department of Education serves as the lead agency, working cooperatively with the departments of Health, Human Services, and Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities to provide the services necessary to meet the needs of each eligible child. The services are provided at no cost to families.

Special Education — State law mandates that free and appropriate educational services be provided to all children from ages 3 through 21 who have

special needs, including children who are intellectually gifted and children who are functionally delayed. More than 166,000 Tennessee students with various needs presently receive special education services from local school systems and other agencies.

Special Schools — The four special schools administered through the Department of Education are:

Tennessee School for the Blind, Donelson. This residential school serves legally blind and multi-handicapped children, ages 3 through 21.

Tennessee School for the Deaf, Knoxville. This residential school serves hearing impaired and multi-handicapped children, ages 3 through 21.

Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute, Jamestown. This comprehensive high school serves students in Fentress County and was established as a memorial to World War I hero Sgt. Alvin C. York.

West Tennessee School for the Deaf, Jackson. This residential and day school serves elementary students, ages 3 through 13, who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) — More than 200,000 secondary students are served in CTE programs in Tennessee. The career and technical offerings cover over 140 occupational choices with these programs supported by eight statewide CTE youth organizations with over 40,000 active members.

CTE classrooms provide a hands-on environment in which students can explore careers, increase their technical skills, reinforce academic skills, develop entrepreneurial skills, and gain practical experience through work-based education.

High Schools that Work is an initiative that raises the math, science, communication, problem-solving, and technical achievement of students to the national average and above by blending the essential content of traditional college-preparatory studies with quality vocational and technical studies. The Jobs for Tennessee Graduates program also partners with businesses statewide who will train and employ students after high school.

Professional Development for School Improvement — In partnership with local school systems, the department offers state-of-the-art training to Tennessee educators through a variety of training settings. This includes professional development training for directors of schools, school board members, principals, assistant principals, instructional supervisors, and teachers. Participants learn new leadership and management skills, as well as to develop an information network across the state.

Governor Bredesen has focused on long-term teacher and principal training as a critical component of student success. He has budgeted \$2 million in new funds to the Department for developing these programs.

Teacher Education and Licensing — There are forty-one colleges and universities approved to offer teacher preparation programs in Tennessee. To teach full time in a Tennessee public school, a person must have a valid Tennessee teaching license. Licensing is provided to individuals who have completed teacher preparedness programs at an approved higher education institution and meet certain testing requirements. Beginning teachers serve a three-year apprentice period before they may be recommended through local evaluation for a ten-year professional license.

The Department is also involved in recruiting new teachers for students in Tennessee. This state has a need for more licensed teachers in the fields of special education, math, science, foreign languages, and English language learners. To provide for this need, the Become A Special Educator (BASE-TN)

and Governor Bredesen's Teach Tennessee recruitment programs were launched in 2005 to add to existing recruiting campaigns, such as Troops to Teachers.

School Nutrition — The office of School Nutrition oversees 138 million meals each year—including 103 million lunches and 35 million breakfasts—served to public school children in Tennessee. Approximately 59 million free and reduced price school lunches and 28 million free and reduced price school breakfasts are served each year to eligible children from low-income families.

Textbook and Library Media Services — The office of Textbook and Library Media Services administers the functions of the State Textbook Commission and coordinates the local textbook adoption process.

Related Councils and Commissions

Tennessee Advisory Council for Education of Students with Disabilities — This state advisory council, appointed by the governor, advises the governor, the legislature, and the commissioner of education on special programs and issues which will help meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Tennessee Advisory Council for Teacher Education and Certification — The council is appointed by the State Board of Education to advise the board on matters involving teacher education programs and teacher certification. The council includes teachers, administrators and supervisors, representatives from institutions of higher education, and representatives of local boards of education and the community.

Tennessee Council on Career and Technical Education — This council is an independent advisory group of thirteen persons appointed by the governor to assist the State Board of Education and the State Board of Regents in formulating statewide educational policy and programs for vocational-technical education.

Tennessee Interagency Coordinating Council — This council advises and assists the state's lead agency (Tennessee Department of Education) in the responsibilities specified under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for implementation of a statewide system of early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The governor appoints council members, and the council's composition is specified by federal statute.

Tennessee Textbook Commission — The ten-member commission is appointed by the governor to review and recommend to the State Board of Education a list of textbooks for the board's approval for use in public schools. The commission publishes a list of approved textbooks, determines policies and conditions for the addition or removal of textbooks from the state textbook lists, sets standards and specifications for textbooks, and contracts with publishers for the prices charged during the contract period. Textbook Commission members are appointed for three-year terms and include six full-time practicing educators and three lay citizens. The commissioner of education serves as secretary of the commission.

Governor's Books from Birth Foundation (www.governorsfoundation.org) — This not-for-profit foundation was created by Governor Phil Bredesen in 2004 to provide matching grants and tangible resources to Tennesseans seeking to establish countywide "Imagination Library" programs. In addition, foundation staff raise statewide monies to financially assist "distressed" counties with program costs.

Tennessee Commission on Holocaust Education — Established in 1984, the Commission was charged in 1996 with the primary focus of education as its mission. The Commission provides a variety of educational services and opportunities. It sponsors conferences for students, secondary school teachers, university faculties and the general public in addition to other special Holocaust programming.

Commissioner Lana C. Seivers
Tennessee Department of Education



Appointed by Governor Phil Bredesen in January of 2003, **Lana Seivers** brings a broad perspective to her role as Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education. Seivers, a native of Clinton, has served as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. For most of her career, she worked in the Oak Ridge Schools where she specialized in elementary and special education and later served as director of early childhood education and principal of Linden Elementary School. Previous to her appointment as Commissioner, she was superintendent of Clinton City Schools. Her experience in education is varied and includes appointments by former Governors McWherter and Sundquist to the Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities. She is a past chair of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Tennessee Committee for Elementary and Middle Schools and has served as chair of the East Tennessee Superintendents' Study Council and treasurer of the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents. Seivers was one of two superintendents statewide to serve as a consultant for the Institute for School Leaders, a project coordinated by the state of Tennessee and Vanderbilt University and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She currently serves on the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the Tennessee Board of Regents, the Education Commission of the States, the Southern Regional Educational Board, the Jobs Cabinet, and the Children's Cabinet. She is the 2005 recipient of the "Distinguished Educational Leadership Award" presented by the SACS Council on Accreditation and School Improvement. Seivers is active in the Council of Chief State School Officers and serves on its "Cadre of Champions" for early childhood education. She has testified before the U.S. Senate Education Subcommittee for K-12 Education and is a member of the U.S. Department of Education task force on growth models. Seivers holds a bachelor's degree in education from Middle Tennessee State University, a master's degree in educational administration from the University of Tennessee and a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Tennessee.