



Quick Reference Guide



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About this Document

The *Quick Reference Guide* is developed by the Tennessee State Board of Education (State Board) as a resource for public use. The guide contains information about several education topics relevant to the work of the State Board and in response to frequently asked questions. For additional information on any of the topics included in this guide, please visit the State Board's [website](#) or contact the State Board at (615) 741-2966.



About the Tennessee State Board of Education

The State Board is the policy making body for Tennessee's Pre-K-12 public education system. Its work touches all facets of education from accountability and evaluation to standards and teacher education. In 2020, the State Board adopted a [Master Plan](#) that sets five-year goals and annual policy priorities to ensure policies and systems are in place so that all students are prepared for success after graduation.

The State Board is comprised of 11 members representing the diversity of the state — one from each of the nine congressional districts, plus a student member, and the executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission who serves as a non-voting ex officio member. Board members are unpaid and serve five-year terms. Historically, board members have been appointed by the governor and confirmed by the General Assembly; however, new legislation now requires the governor, speaker of the House, and speaker of the Senate to each appoint board members. Visit the State Board's [website](#) to view the map of board members' districts.

Across the myriad of policy decisions that come before the State Board at each quarterly and special-called meeting, the Board strives to be a transparent, student-focused body. Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-1-302, among other laws, outlines the duties assigned to the State Board by the Tennessee General Assembly. These duties include, but are not limited to:

- Provide recommendations to the governor and General Assembly for the funding of public education
- Adopt policies governing the qualifications, requirements, and standards for the licenses and certificates of all public-school teachers, principals, supervisors, and directors of schools
- Discipline licensed professionals for misconduct by formal reprimand, suspension, and revocation of educator licenses and certificates
- Establish policies for graduation requirements
- Set policies governing all academic standards and courses of study in public schools
- Determine ways and means of improving teacher, student, and school performance
- Develop guidelines for differentiated pay plans to be established by school districts
- Approve textbooks upon the recommendation of the Tennessee Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission
- Establish a teacher evaluation system
- Approve all teacher preparation programs
- Establish standards for quality charter school authorizing and evaluate authorizers of charter schools



Achievement School District

The [Achievement School District](#) (ASD) was established as a local education agency (LEA), also known as a school district, within the Tennessee Department of Education by the Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010. The ASD is charged with reforming and improving the schools performing in the bottom 5% across the state. The district's first cohort of schools officially launched in 2012 and it currently serves students in Shelby County and Davidson County.

The ASD continues to exist as an agency within the Department of Education. The State Board evaluates the district's charter school authorizing policies and processes as part of the State Board's authorizer evaluation work.



Annual Measurable Objectives and Accountability

Annual Performance Goals, known to Tennessee public schools as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), provide schools and districts with targets which help interpret recent performance and prioritize future efforts. Unlike other states, Tennessee sets each of these targets individually for each school/district and for each student group, using the most recent available performance as the starting point for each goal. These targets align with the requirements of federal accountability set in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provide measurements for all student groups, which include economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and English learners.

How AMOs are Calculated

AMO targets for student achievement are set by determining the rate of improvement needed to reduce the percentage of students who are not scoring on track or mastered on state assessments by half within eight (8) years. Districts have AMO targets for student achievement in grades 3- 5, 6-8, and 9-12. Schools have AMO targets for student achievement in the relevant grades they serve.

In addition to AMOs for student achievement, there are also AMO targets set for chronic absenteeism, English language proficiency assessment (ELPA) performance, high school graduation rates, and Ready Graduate outcomes. These AMO targets are calculated using the same formulas shown above except for chronic absenteeism, which has a modified formula that measures reduction rather than growth.

Student Subgroups

Indicator scores for districts and schools are calculated for all students and for student subgroups (including Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, English Learners, and Black/Hispanic/Native American students). In the final score, performance for all students is weighted at 60% while subgroup performance is weighted at 40%.

Accountability

AMOs are used in the calculation of district accountability designations and school A-F grades. Districts receive an accountability designation based on six indicators:

- 3-5 Success Rate
- 6-8 Success Rate
- 9-12 Success Rate
- Chronically Out of School
- Graduation Rate
- English Language Proficiency Assessment

Each indicator is scored on a scale of zero (0) to four (4). Half of each indicator score is based on performance and half on growth. For the half that is based on performance, there are two options: absolute performance or performance relative to AMO target. The accountability formula automatically selects the option that results in a higher score.



Board Training Requirements: Charter School Governing Body Members

The State Board is responsible for setting the minimum training requirements of charter school governing body members and approving governing body training courses. State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.07 establishes the minimum annual training requirements for charter school governing body members and sets forth the process for the approval of training courses certified by the Tennessee Charter School Center.

New governing board members shall, at a minimum, complete six hours of training within 12 months of joining the governing body. Experienced governing board members shall, at a minimum, complete four hours of training by November 15 each year.

Compliance Monitoring

The Tennessee Charter School Center is responsible for providing charter school authorizers with a list of all governing body members who have completed the training requirements by the annual deadline. Charter school authorizers are required to monitor charter governing body compliance with training requirements. For a complete list of available training courses, please review the State Board's [Policy 6.112](#).

Prospective Training Course Providers

Applications for approval of a charter school governing body training course must be submitted to the Tennessee Charter School Center.



Board Training Requirements: Local School Board Members

The State Board establishes the minimum requirements for the annual training of local school board members. State Board Rule 0520-01-02-.11 sets forth the process for approving the local board training courses and requires the State Board to convene an [advisory committee](#) to evaluate and recommend course proposals for approval.

Newly elected or newly appointed members of a local board of education shall, at a minimum, participate in 21 hours of training during their first year in office. Experienced local school board members with one or more years of service on a local board of education shall, at a minimum, complete seven hours of training each fiscal year.

Compliance Monitoring

The Department of Education is responsible for monitoring local school board member compliance with this rule. For a complete list of available training courses, please review the State Board's [Policy 2.100](#).

Prospective Training Course Providers

The State Board collects applications from prospective training course providers by February 15 each year. Interested applicants should visit the State Board's [website](#) to learn more about the process and review the application and rubric.

Bullying

Every student deserves to be treated with respect and have a safe and civil learning environment. T.C.A. § 49-6-4503 instructs each school district to adopt their own [policy](#) prohibiting harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying. The law specifies that each school district's bullying policy should include the following:

- A procedure for reporting an act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying, including a provision that permits a person to report an act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying anonymously.
- A procedure for prompt investigation of a report of an act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying;
- A statement of the way a school district will respond after an act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying is reported, investigated and confirmed.

Reporting

Each public school district is required to submit a report on bullying and harassment compliance to the Department of Education by August 1 annually. The Department of Education's [Office of Civil Rights](#) posts the annual compliance reports and data on their website and provides it to the General Assembly.

While there is not a statewide policy designed to prohibit bullying, the law indicates that issues of student conduct and bullying are at the discretion of the local school districts. When you are not satisfied with the response from the school, contact the school district office and take the appropriate steps to file a grievance. If the issue goes beyond bullying and appears to be harassment, contact the Department of Education's [Office of Civil Rights](#) for more information.

Resources

- [Bullying and Harassment Guide](#): designed by the Department of Education to inform school districts of their obligations under state and federal laws regarding bullying and harassment.
- [State Board Policy 4.202 – Unsafe School Choice Policy](#): provides any student who attends a persistently dangerous school, or any student who has been the victim of a violent crime while at school, the opportunity to attend a safe school.
- [State Board Policy 4.209 - Mental Health Standards and Guidelines](#): encourages schools and districts to adopt protocols, standards and guidelines that will address the prevention, early identification, referral, and follow up of student mental health needs.
- [Stop Bullying Now!](#): provides information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators, and others in the community can prevent or stop bullying.



Charter Schools

Background

In Tennessee, charter schools are public schools operated by independent, non-profit governing bodies and are measured against the same academic standards as students in other public schools. In 2002, a new state law was passed allowing public charter schools to open and operate in Tennessee. The first charter school opened in 2003 and was limited to serving only students from schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress. Over the next few years, the charter law was amended to expand the qualifications of students who could attend charter schools and to increase the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in the state. By 2011, the charter law was amended to open charter schools up to all students and to remove the cap on the number of charter schools operating in Tennessee.

2014 saw another change to the state’s charter law, this time allowing the State Board to serve as an appellate authorizer of charter schools and in 2017, the first charter school approved by the State Board opened in Memphis, Tennessee. In subsequent years, the charter law was amended to require the State Board to adopt quality charter authorizing standards, to allow authorizers to collect an authorizer fee, and to create the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission and charge the State Board with evaluating charter school authorizers (This law transferred the ability to hear appeals and approve charter schools to the new Charter School Commission from the State Board). See *Charter School Authorizer Evaluations* for information regarding the evaluation process.

The Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act is contained in Tennessee Code Annotated §§ 49-13-101 through 145, State Board Rules 0520-14-01 and 0520-14-02 provide further information regarding the approval of a charter school, allocation of funds, enrollment, fees, governing body training requirements, and authorizer evaluations.

	State Board of Education	Department of Education	Public Charter School Commission
Charter School Rules and Policies	Sets rules and policies for pre-K-12 public education, including charter schools and charter school authorizers	Supports districts and charter schools in implementing the rules and policies	Sets rules and policies for the charter school appeals processes
Charter School Appeals	<i>As of July 1, 2021, all responsibilities for charter appeals have transferred to the Public Charter School Commission</i>	Develops and publishes charter school new start, amendment, and renewal applications	As of July 1, 2021, appellate body responsible for receiving appeals of a local board of education’s decision to deny a new start, amendment, or renewal application and a decision to revoke a charter agreement
Charter School Authorizing	<i>As of July 1, 2021, all authorized charter schools transferred to the Public Charter School Commission</i>	Operates the Achievement School District, which authorizes 21 charter schools (as of the 2020-21 school year)	Authorizer of three open and operating charter schools approved upon appeal (as of 2020-21 school year)
Charter School Reporting and Evaluation	Ensures the effective operation of the state’s six current authorizers and evaluates authorizer quality	Monitors reporting requirements for charter schools and charter school authorizers	Evaluates its authorized charter schools and publishes its own authorizing report to the Department of Education



Charter School Oversight

The charter school authorizer (either a local board of education, the Achievement School District, or Tennessee Public Charter School Commission), is responsible for ensuring that only those charter schools that are meeting the needs of their students open and remain in operation. Charter school authorizers do this through rigorous application processes, ongoing monitoring of the academic, financial, and operational performance of charter schools, and, when necessary, through intervention, revocation, or non-renewal of charters.

Tennessee has three state agencies that are directly involved with charter schools: The **State Board of Education**, the **Department of Education**, and the **Public Charter School Commission**. Though the agencies work together closely, each agency has its own unique set of responsibilities regarding charter schools.



Charter School Authorizer Evaluations

The State Board was charged with conducting periodic charter school authorizer evaluations by the Tennessee General Assembly during the 2019 legislative session. Under the statutory requirement, the State Board developed an evaluation system based on its [Quality Charter Authorizing Standards Policy](#). As of 2022, Tennessee is among the few states to adopt an authorizer evaluation process.

Each charter school authorizer evaluation begins with the formation of an evaluation team and an examination of the authorizer's performance based on the Board's Quality Charter Authorizing Standards rubric. At the conclusion of the evaluation, authorizers receive a final report detailing specific feedback, scores on the rubric's 24 standards, an overall rating, and follow-up actions. Authorizers can earn an overall rating on a scale from zero to four, with score ranges indicating unsatisfactory/incomplete, approaching satisfactory, satisfactory, commendable, and exemplary designations.

Prior to launching the new charter authorizer evaluation process, the State Board of Education collected feedback from charter school operators, authorizers, and stakeholders and convened a task force to help develop the evaluation process. In 2020, the Board conducted a voluntary pilot evaluation to simulate the process and further refine its evaluation practices.

Tennessee's charter authorizer evaluation cycle is conducted over a two-year period, which began in 2021. Authorizers are assigned a cohort that does not change regardless of an evaluation outcome. Cohort I includes Knox County Schools, Hamilton County Schools, and Memphis-Shelby County Schools. Cohort II includes the Achievement School District, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Additional charter school authorizers shall be assigned to a cohort as needed.

For additional information, including access to prior charter authorizer evaluation reports, visit the [State Board of Education's website](#).



Common Core Instructional Materials

Background

In late 2014/early 2015, Governor Bill Haslam and the General Assembly made the decision to move Tennessee away from using Common Core standards and established a comprehensive and transparent review process that ensures all Tennesseans can provide input in Tennessee's academic standards (See *Standards Review Process*).

Current Law

The Department of Education, the State Board of Education, the State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission (Commission), local school districts, and public charter schools are required to be in compliance with current law and update guidance documents to reflect any legislative changes. For additional guidance on implementation of these laws, see guidance developed by the State Board and Department of Education [here](#).

Textbook Adoption Cycle

As provided by law, the textbook and instructional materials adoption process, generally referred to as the "adoption cycle," includes the following:

- The Commission prepares a list of standard editions of textbooks and instructional materials that cover a complete program of study for approval by the State Board for use in Tennessee public schools.
 - The list must include at least four books or sets of instructional materials in each subject and grade for which textbooks or instructional materials are to be adopted.
- During the textbook adoption cycle for a particular subject, the Commission accepts bids from publishers, reviews the textbooks and instructional materials included in each bid, and prepares a list of textbooks recommended by the Commission for approval to the State Board of Education.
 - After State Board approval of the Commission-recommended list for a particular subject, the Commission contracts with textbook publishers whose textbooks and instructional materials were approved by the Commission and the State Board. The contracts may be for a period of no more than seventy-three months.
 - The law allows the Commission to extend any existing contracts for up to two additional years. The authority to extend the contracts is intended to ensure there is always a state contract in place for school districts until the next textbook and instructional materials adoption cycle for a particular subject.
- Local boards of education are required to adopt textbooks and instructional materials to be used in their school districts from the list of textbooks and instructional materials adopted by the Commission and approved by the State Board. Local boards are required to utilize local adoption committees to review textbooks proposed for district-wide adoption. Once adopted, local boards contract with textbook publishers utilizing the state contract.
- The law encourages local boards of education to adopt and make at least one textbook or instructional material in each subject available for use by every student at reading level in every grade.
- The current lists of approved textbooks and instructional materials and state contracts for materials based on that list were created and executed prior to the passage of PC 205 and PC 471.



Continuous Learning Plans

As a result of the disruptions to public education caused by COVID-19, the State Board approved its Rule 0520-01-17, which requires all school districts and public charter schools to develop Continuous Learning Plans (CLP). Each CLP is approved by the Department of Education and designed to address how the school district or public charter school will continue to provide quality instruction during a disruption to school operations in response to a governor-declared state of emergency.

A school district or public charter school may only begin the implementation of an approved CLP when the following conditions are met:

- The governor or the governor's designee has declared a state of emergency or a disaster declaration via an executive order or proclamation or by the activation of the Tennessee Emergency Management Plan pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated Title 58; and
- The disaster or declared state of emergency disrupts the traditional operations of the public charter school or one or more schools within the school district; and
- The school district or public charter school provides notice to the Department of its intent to implement the CLP, including the justification for implementation; and
- The Department grants permission for the school district or public charter school to implement its approved CLP.

Approved CLPs and additional information about the approval process are available on the Department of Education's [website](#). School districts and public charter schools with a previously approved CLP shall conduct reviews prior to implementation to determine if revisions to the previously approved CLP are necessary. If a school district or public charter school makes material revisions to the previously approved CLP, the revisions must be submitted via a request form to the Department of Education. Material revisions shall not become effective until approved by the Department of Education. For guidance on what constitutes a material revision, please review [this document](#).

In addition to CLPs, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter [897](#) in 2022 allowing school districts to utilize remote instruction in certain circumstances including extreme weather, serious outbreak of illness or TCAP testing dates, not to exceed two days per semester.



Education Savings Accounts

On May 24, 2019, Governor Bill Lee signed the Education Savings Account Program (Public Chapter 506) into law, which creates education savings accounts (ESAs) for eligible students to use for educational purposes. However, due to litigation that challenged the implementation of ESAs in Tennessee, the launch of the program was delayed until the 2022-23 school year.

The ESA program provides options for parents of eligible students to choose the educational opportunities that best meet the individual needs of their child by giving them direct access to state and local public education funds. Eligible students may use these funds toward education expenses as well as tuition or fees at approved private schools. Details about the program can be found on the ESA [website](#) and in State Board [Rule 0520-01-16](#).



Educator Licensure

The State Board of Education has the authority to adopt policies governing the qualifications, requirements, and standards of, and provide the licenses and certificates for, all public-school teachers, principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and directors of schools. The Department of Education is responsible for establishing and publishing all licensure application forms and timelines, issuing Tennessee educator licenses, and recommending educator preparation programs for approval to the State Board.

The Department of Education's [Office of Educator Licensure](#) publishes information regarding:

- Management of Tennessee licenses;
- Guidance for all licensure transactions (e.g., apply, advance, renew, etc.) for new educators, licensed educators, instructional leaders, and out-of-state educators;
- Guidance on the literacy licensure requirement contained in the [2021 Tennessee Literacy Success Act](#);
- Out-of-state educator assessment waiver requests; and
- Resources for educators seeking employment in Tennessee.

As outlined in State Board Rule [0520-02-03](#), all educators in Tennessee are required to hold one of the following license types:

- The **practitioner license** is the first level license issued to applicants who meet the requirements set forth in State Board rule.
 - There are three types of practitioner licenses: practitioner teacher license, practitioner occupational teacher license, and practitioner school services personnel license.
- The **professional license** is issued to educators who have met licensure expectations at the practitioner level and who meet the requirements for advancement set forth in State Board rule.
 - There are three types of professional licenses: professional teacher license, professional occupational teacher license, and professional school services personnel license.
- The **JROTC license** is issued to active or retired military personnel who seek to serve as Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) instructors.
- The **license for postsecondary educators (PSE)** is issued to applicants who have been a full-time or part-time college professor or instructor and meet the requirements set forth in State Board rule.
- The **adjunct license** is issued to applicants seeking to teach no more than three classes in a content area of critical shortage who meet the requirements set forth State Board rule.
- The **Instructional Leader License-Aspiring (ILL-A)** is issued to applicants who hold a bachelor's degree, are enrolled in an instructional leadership preparation program approved by the State Board of Education, and meet the requirements set forth in State Board rule.
- The **Instructional Leader License (ILL)** is issued to applicants who hold a bachelor's degree, have completed an instructional leadership preparation program approved by the State Board of Education, and meet the requirements set forth in State Board rule.
- The **Instructional Leader License-Professional (ILL-P)** is issued to educators currently holding the ILL who meet the requirements for advancement set forth in State Board rule.
- The **Limited License** is issued to educators who hold a valid temporary teaching permit who meet the requirements set forth in this Rule.

State Board rule sets forth the requirements for each license type for in- and out-of-state prospective educators as well as the requirements for renewal. In addition to a full and valid educator license, all educators shall have an endorsement covering the work assignment as provided in T.C.A. Title 49, Chapter 5. Educators may add



additional endorsements to a license in accordance with State Board rule, State Board Educator Licensure [Policy 5.502](#) and guidelines established by the Department of Education.

Permits and Endorsement Exemptions

Permits and endorsement exemptions are emergency credentials issued on an academic year basis, from July 1—June 30, enabling districts to fill critical vacancies for which an appropriately licensed and endorsed educator could not be recruited. Endorsement exemptions (formerly known as waivers) enable placement of a licensed educator in courses outside of the educator’s area of endorsement. Permits enable a placement of an unlicensed individual in a teaching role if an appropriately licensed and endorsed educator cannot be recruited when all criteria outlined in State Board Rule 0520-02-03-.12 are met.

In reviewing a permit or endorsement exemption request, the commissioner of the Department of Education may consider individuals’ previous work experience, postsecondary coursework, degrees held, and relevant experience in the subject area for which the emergency credential is requested. Districts must submit documentation of a targeted recruitment strategy for the position or shortage areas in which emergency credentials are requested.

Permit and Endorsement Exemption Restrictions

When the position requires a separate license, not just an endorsement (e.g., the Instructional Leadership License), the commissioner may not waive licensure. Unless otherwise stipulated in State Board Rule 0529-02-03, permits and endorsement exemptions cannot be issued for an elementary physical education class required under T.C.A. § 49-6-1021(e), a course in which an end of course exam (EOC) is required, or a special education course.

For additional information regarding permits and endorsement exemptions, review the Department of Education’s [Educator Licensure & Preparation Operating Procedures](#).

Emergency Teacher License

A Tennessee emergency teacher license may be issued to educators who hold a valid license from a state other than Tennessee and who were displaced under one of the following circumstances:

- The governor declares a state of emergency or declares a disaster under T.C.A. § 582-107, and the commissioner of Education determines the necessity of conferring an emergency teacher license to displaced persons, or
- A federal state of emergency is declared anywhere in the United States, and the commissioner of Education determines the necessity of conferring an emergency teacher license to displaced persons.

An emergency teacher license shall only be valid for one school year.



Educator Preparation

The State Board is responsible for approving all educator preparation providers (EPPs) and the specialty area programs (SAPs) they offer. State Board [Rule 0520-02-04](#) and State Board [Policy 5.504](#) provide requirements for educator preparation including approval, provider and program reviews, admission, partnerships, and clinical experiences.

Impact of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act of 2021

In accordance with the Tennessee Literacy Success Act of 2021, beginning on August 1, 2022, EPPs must provide training on reading instruction focused primarily on foundational literacy skills standards to candidates seeking licensure to teach grades K-3 as well as candidates seeking instructional leader licenses. In alignment with the Act, these foundational literacy skills standards include:

- How to effectively teach the foundational literacy skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
- How to scaffold instruction for teaching students with advanced reading skills and students with significant reading deficiencies;
- How to identify the characteristics of dyslexia and provide effective instruction for teaching students with these characteristics using evidence-based, multisensory interventions;
- How to implement reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials;
- Behavior management through trauma-informed principles for the classroom and other developmentally appropriate supports to ensure that students can effectively access reading instruction; and
- How to administer a universal reading screener to students and use the resulting data to improve reading instruction for students.

State Board [Policy 5.505](#) includes the EPP literacy standards which emphasize foundational literacy skills for Early Childhood, Elementary, Special Education, and Instructional Leader licensure.

Educator Preparation Report Card

The annual [Educator Preparation Report Card](#) presents data on the State Board's key priority areas for preparing educators in Tennessee: recruiting strong, diverse candidates to teach in the areas of greatest need; employment in Tennessee public schools; strong teaching performance; and effectively supporting our students' learning.

In 2007, the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation requiring the publication of a report on key metrics of EPPs throughout the state. Several aspects of the report card are mandated through that legislation, including indicators on placement and retention rates, scores on licensure exams, and teacher effect data based on Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores. The report card also includes other key priority areas for the State Board. This information can help providers make program improvements and provide the public with information on important aspects of educator preparation in the state.

Previously produced by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the State Board redesigned the Educator Preparation Report Card in 2016 to become a user-friendly web-based resource for aspiring teachers, local school districts, and EPPs themselves. Since taking ownership of the Report Card, state-level data shows long-term positive trends in high-demand endorsements, teacher diversity, and second-year retention. The Educator Preparation Report Card is published on or before February 15 each year.



English Learners

Tennessee is committed to ensuring that all students, including English learners, have the opportunity for success in rigorous coursework, access to early postsecondary opportunities, and access to highly effective teachers. State Board Rule Chapter [0520-01-09](#) defines the requirements for identifying, screening and providing service to students, parental notification and rights, staffing ratios, and exiting students from English language services.

The Department of Education provides resources for educators and parents via their [website](#), including the English as a Second Language Manual, English Learner Framework, Fact Sheet on the Rights of All Children to Enroll, and a Guide to Supporting Long-Term English Learners.

Assessment

Per federal law, states are required to assess the English proficiency of all English learner students. Additionally, states are required to annually measure English learners' progress in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The following are the assessments required for English learners in Tennessee:

- ACCESS 2.0
 - The results from ACCESS 2.0 are used in accountability measures and to provide districts with information about their English learners.
 - Student results on ACCESS 2.0 guide decisions regarding student participation in content area classrooms, as well as their need for English as a Second Language (ESL) services.
 - For additional information and resources, visit WIDA's [website](#). Tennessee-specific guidance is available [here](#).
- Content Area Assessments
 - All students, including English learners, must participate in regular state testing for their grade level and content area.
 - Visit the [TCAP webpage](#) for information about our state assessments.



Graduation Requirements

Students in Tennessee may earn the following high school diploma options:

- Traditional high school diploma;
- Special education high school diploma;
- Occupational high school diploma; or
- Alternative academic high school diploma.

To earn a traditional high school diploma, students must complete a minimum of 22 credits (see details below), participate in the ACT or SAT, and have a satisfactory record of attendance and discipline. High school students are tested in core subject areas with End of Course (EOC) exams, part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). A students' performance on these exams will factor into the grade for the course.

Total Required Credits: 22

- **Math:** 4 credits, including Algebra I, II, Geometry (or the equivalent Integrated Math I, II, and III) and a fourth higher level math course. Students must be enrolled in a mathematics course each school year.
- **English:** 4 credits.
- **Science:** 3 credits, including Biology, Chemistry or Physics, and a third lab course.
- **Social Studies:** 3 credits, including U.S. History and Geography, World History and Geography, U.S. Government and Civics, and Economics.
- **Physical Education and Wellness:** 1.5 credits.
- **Personal Finance:** 0.5 credits. Three years of JROTC may be substituted for one-half unit of Personal Finance if the JROTC instructor attends the Personal Finance training conducted by the Department of Education.
- **World Language:** 2 credits, both of which must be earned in the same world language. This requirement may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.
- **Fine Arts:** 1 credit. This requirement may be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus.
- **Elective Focus:** 3 credits consisting of Math and Science, Career and Technical Education, Fine Arts, Humanities, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB).
- **Computer Science:** 1 credit. This requirement may be used as a 4th year math credit, 3rd year science credit or elective focus credit.

State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.06 outlines the requirements for each of the high school diploma types in Tennessee and provides additional information about the required courses for graduation. The Department of Education's [course catalog](#) provides the public with a searchable list of courses and the graduation requirement substitutions for the course, if available.



High School Diplomas and Transcripts

For copies of a high school diploma or transcript, contact the local school district in which the high school is located or the public charter school. The State Board does not have access to any student files, documentation, diplomas, or transcripts. If a local school district or public charter school is unable to produce the requested documentation, contact the Department of Education. Duplicate diplomas may also be requested through the Department of Education using the [Duplicate Diploma Request Form](#) available on their website.



Licensure Discipline

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-1-302 gives the State Board the duty and power to "adopt rules and policies governing ... [the] discipline of licensed personnel for misconduct by formal reprimand or by the suspension and revocation of licenses and certificates." T.C.A. § 49-5-108 gives the State Board "[c]omplete jurisdiction over the issuance and administration of licenses..."

Reporting

T.C.A. § 49-5-417(c) requires directors of schools, directors of a public charter school, or directors of a nonpublic school to submit to the State Board an initial report regarding licensed educators employed by the school district, charter school, or nonpublic school, respectively, who have been suspended or dismissed, or who have resigned, following allegations of conduct, including sexual misconduct, which, if substantiated, would warrant consideration for license suspension or revocation under State Board rule. Licensure discipline reports, including the Initial Director's Report, Final Report, and any investigative materials or additional documentation, must be submitted to the State Board through TNCompass by the Director of Schools or their designee.

Once information is submitted in TNCompass, State Board attorneys will review the request to determine if the educator's license or permit should be placed under State Board Review. The Director of Schools or their designee and the educator will receive an email notifying them whether the educator's license or permit has been placed under review. A step-by-step guide to submitting the Initial Director's Report, Final Report, and supporting documentation through TNCompass can be found via the State Board's [website](#).

The State Board will continue to accept Director's Initial and Final Reports and additional documentation via fax, e-mail, or mail if submission via TNCompass is not accessible or feasible due to extenuating circumstances. Private school directors who do not have access to TNCompass may also submit reports via fax, e-mail, or mail. Please contact the State Board's attorneys or paralegals for further assistance and guidance by phone at (615) 741-2966 or by email at EducatorLicense.Discipline@tn.gov.

If you encounter technical issues with TNCompass, please contact TNCompass support by phone at (877) 314-1412 or by email at Support@TNCompass.org.

If your investigative materials/additional documentation includes audio or video recordings, please submit the files via email at EducatorLicense.Discipline@tn.gov.

Licensure Misconduct Review Process

If State Board staff finds the alleged misconduct falls under the one of the categories defined in State Board [Rule 0520-02-03-.09](#), the educator's license is placed under "State Board Review." An educator's license remains fully active while under State Board Review. The review is not a disciplinary action and does not preclude the educator from continuing their employment during the review period.

Once a license is under review, State Board staff begin the review process, which includes reaching out to the district that made the report to collect investigative materials such as video, photographs, witness statements, and reports made to other state agencies (DCS, local law enforcement, etc.). Once all the information available is received by State Board staff, the Board's legal team reviews the information to determine if an applicable licensure action is warranted and presents the recommendation to the State Board staff's case review committee. If the case review committee determines there is not cause to impose a licensure action, the educator's license is no longer under review. However, if the case review committee determines that licensure action is warranted, staff attorneys will inform the educator of next steps.



The written notification shall include information about due process rights prior to any licensure action. Educators have the right to agree to the proposed action or to request a hearing before an administrative law judge with the Tennessee Secretary of State Administrative Procedures Division. If a hearing is requested, the case is heard by an administrative law judge sitting on behalf of the State Board to determine the appropriate licensure action, if any. Licensure action shall only be imposed against an educator if voted on by the Board, ordered by an administrative law judge through a contested case proceeding, or the educator and the Board enter into a settlement agreement pursuant to State Board policy.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What needs to be reported?**

Directors of Schools or their designees are required to report to the State Board of Education any licensed educators who have been suspended, terminated, or resigned following allegations of misconduct which if substantiated would warrant consideration for license reprimand, suspension, or revocation under the rule. Reports to the Board must be made within thirty days.

- **What happens when a district doesn't report a case that should have been reported?**

Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-5-417(c)(4) states, "The state board may issue a public reprimand if a director fails to make a report as required by this part or by the state board. The state board shall send a copy of the reprimand to the director and a copy to the local board of education, charter school governing body, or nonpublic school governing body as applicable." Additionally, directors of schools who maintain an active Tennessee educator license may be subject to license discipline for failure to report under State Board rules.

- **What expectations does the state have and how important is it districts follow the rules in place?**

By holding our state's educators to the highest standards, we can ensure the safety of our children and preserve the professional integrity of the teaching profession. Our children come to classrooms to learn, not to be preyed on or mistreated by their authority figures. When we hold our excellent educators to the highest professional standards, our students can focus on what should be their priority: learning.



Military Interstate Children's Compact (MIC3)

The Council of State Governments (CSG), in cooperation with the US Department of Defense, drafted the Interstate Compact to address some of the educational challenges transitioning children of military families face. Since July 2006, CSG worked with a variety of federal, state and local officials as well as national stakeholder organizations representing education groups and military families to create the new interstate agreement. The goal of the Compact is to replace the widely varying policies affecting transitioning military students. The Compact leverages consistency by use of a comprehensive approach that provides a consistent policy in every school district and in every state that chooses to join. Tennessee is among the states that have joined the Compact.

While the Compact is not exhaustive in its coverage, it does address the key issues encountered by military families: eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation. In addition, the Compact provides a detailed governance structure at both the state and national levels with built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms. Children of active-duty members of the uniformed services, National Guard and Reserve on active-duty orders, commissioned officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), and members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired for one year are eligible for assistance under the Compact. The Compact also covers students of members who perish on active duty for a period of one year following their death.

For more information and resources, please visit the State Board's [website](#).



Non-Public Schools

T.C.A. § 49-6-3001 requires every child residing in Tennessee between the ages of six and seventeen to attend a public or non-public school. Non-public schools are defined in law as including private schools, church-related schools, and independent home schools. T.C.A § 49-1-302(i) provides that the State Board, through the Department of Education, shall “enforce standards for... programs operated by private schools as defined by § 49-6-3001(c)(3).” T.C.A. § 49-50-801 provides requirements for church-related schools and grants the State Board limited authority regarding approval of these schools.

State Board of Education Rules 0520-07-01 and 0520-07-02 establish the administrative requirements and approval process for private and church-related schools in Tennessee, including establishment of the five categories of private and church-related schools. A current list of private and church-related schools and information about starting a new private or church-related school can be found on the Department of Education’s [website](#). Additionally, licensed private or church-related school educators remain subject to the State Board’s educator license discipline rule. See *Licensure Discipline* for more information.

Accrediting agencies seeking approval by the State Board as a Category II private school accrediting agency must apply to the Department of Education, who evaluates applications and determines which agencies will be recommended for approval to the State Board every five (5) years. Information about how to apply can be found on the Department of Education’s website.



School and District Grievances

Public Schools and Local School Districts

The State Board of Education is the policy-making body for K-12 education in Tennessee. While the State Board sets the rules and policies that govern local districts and schools, it is a common misconception that the State Board has oversight over the affairs of local school districts or schools. The State Board receives many phone calls, letters, and emails requesting assistance on matters that are of local control. However, the State Board only has the legal authority to intervene in areas where it has received specific authority by the Tennessee General Assembly.

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-2-203, a local board of education has the authority to "manage and control all public schools established or that may be established under its jurisdiction." Additionally, T.C.A. § 49-2-301 states "each local board of education is authorized to employ a director of schools." Local school district employees, including teachers and principals, are hired by the local director of schools and the director of schools is hired by the local board of education.

Any school level issues should be directed to school leadership. If the issue is not resolved, it should be brought to the attention of the local school districts. Many local school districts have a policy for reporting school grievances and details about the policy are likely available on the district's website under school board policies. For grievances regarding a director of schools, contact the local school board. As local school board members are elected officials, any grievances involving a school board member should be addressed by the board chair or through the local election process.

Private (Non-Public) Schools

Grievances involving non-public schools should be directed to school's leadership or governing body. If the issue is not resolved, it may be brought to the attention of the school's accrediting agency, if applicable. For a list of non-public schools and their accrediting agencies, visit the Department of Education's [website](#).



School Safety

In 2021, the General Assembly appropriated \$20 million in recurring funds as part of the Safe Schools Act. These funds are provided to decrease the likelihood of violent or disruptive behavior and to protect staff and students from harm. The funds are available to all public school districts and may be used for the following purposes:

- Facility security and planning;
- School safety personnel;
- Violence prevention;
- Training and drills; and/or
- Behavioral health.

Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act

T.C.A. §§ 49-6-801-814, known as the SAVE Act, establishes specific and consistent requirements for school districts in providing a safe school environment. The act also establishes a state-level safety team to provide guidance to school districts in their efforts to address, plan, and implement a comprehensive school safety planning strategy.

Each school facility and school district are required to have a comprehensive emergency operations plan developed in collaboration with local emergency response agencies. These plans should be based on natural, technological, and human-caused hazards identified within the community. Plans are submitted to the [TN School Safety Center](#) on a five-year rotation or when any major change has been made to the document.

The Department of Education assists schools in their efforts to provide and maintain safe and supportive learning environments through training and technical assistance and grants administration. Information regarding the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools can be found via the Department of Education's [website](#).

School Resource Officers Programs

Law enforcement and local education agencies have a long history of partnering together for the safety of students. Strong relationships have strengthened the ability of both agencies to prepare for and respond to criminal and/or threatening incidents that occur in school settings. School resource officer programs provide the crucial link between school districts and law enforcement agencies in their continued efforts to establish and maintain secure and safe learning environments. As required by law, the Department of Education provides recommendations for the "employment standards for the eligibility, qualifications and training requirements for school resource officers." Additional information can be found via the Department of Education's [website](#).



Special Education

Tennessee is committed to supporting all students in their academic growth and achievement. State Board Rules [Chapter 0520-01-09](#) outlines the requirements school districts and public charter schools must abide by when providing educational services to students with disabilities and ensuring a free appropriate public education.

To support school districts and public charter schools in providing educational services to students with disabilities, the Department of Education developed its [Special Education Framework](#) to support educators in writing instructionally appropriate IEPs. Additionally, in March 2022, the Department of Education released the administrator's companion guide to the Special Education Framework. The purpose of the [School Leadership for Special Education](#) companion guide is to provide the most pertinent information regarding the multifaceted roles of principals and assistant principals that oversee the delivery of core instruction, interventions, and services provided to students with disabilities throughout the state of Tennessee.

For additional information about educational services and programs for students with special education needs, please visit the Department's Special Education [webpage](#).

Individualized Education Account Program

The Individualized Education Account (IEA) Program is a school choice program for eligible students with disabilities. The program was created by the Individualized Education Act, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015. The first IEAs were awarded in January 2017. The IEA Program gives parents and students access to public education funds to use on certain types of approved educational expenses that best meet their own unique needs.

For more detailed information about the program, please visit the Department of Education's IEA Program [webpage](#) and/or contact the IEA team at IEA.Questions@tn.gov.

IDEA Complaints

While the State Board of Education sets education policy in Tennessee, the Tennessee Department of Education is tasked with implementation and oversight of education systems. For special education complaints, please contact the IDEA complaint investigator at the Tennessee Department of Education. Information about the dispute resolution process can be found on the Department of Education's website [here](#).

504 Complaints

504 complaints may be filed with the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights. Their contact information is below:

Atlanta Office for Civil Rights U.S. Department of Education
61 Forsyth St. S.W., Suite 19T10
Atlanta, GA 30303-8927
Telephone: 404-974-9406
Email: OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov



Standards Review Process

The State Board of Education is charged under Tennessee statute with setting and approving academic standards for the four (4) core content areas of Math, Science, Social Studies, and English Language Arts. Standards are the grade or course-level expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Local school districts are then charged in law with adoption of curriculum, the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program.

State Board [Policy 3.209](#) requires that the Board review all sets of academic standards for the four (4) core content areas at a minimum of every six (6) years. To achieve this mission, the State Board of Education solicits comments and feedback from the public on academic standards during its review cycles. The review is an opportunity for all Tennessee residents to participate in the state's effort to improve outcomes for students by providing feedback on the state's academic standards.

Standards Review in Tennessee

Since 2015, Tennessee's academic standards review process has received over 539,500 reviews and comments from Tennesseans — including parents, teachers, education leaders, and other citizens — and serves as one of the most transparent standards review processes in the country. The standards review process includes the following steps, with further details outlined in the chart below:

1. Public review and commentary
2. Educator Advisory Team revisions
3. Standards Recommendation Committee evaluation and recommendations
4. Final approval from the State Board of Education

After the initial public feedback survey, teams of Tennessee educators from K-12 schools and higher education review the public comments and propose revisions. Later, the revisions become available again for public comment through a second survey. Following this, the Standards Recommendation Committee — a public body appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the House of Representatives and confirmed by the General Assembly—review the proposed revisions and public comments in deciding which standards to recommend to the State Board of Education for final adoption.

Standard Implementation

Tennessee's current implementation strategy utilizes a multi-phased rollout of the new standards intended to emphasize local control and autonomy. In the year preceding standards implementation in classrooms, the Department of Education takes the following approach to training and communication:

- Fall: The Department presents superintendents with the new standards and shares plans for training and resources.
- Winter and Spring: The Department works with instructional leaders (principals, supervisors of instruction, mathematics, or literacy coaches, etc.) through district teams to conduct a series in-depth and content-specific workshops. These workshops aim to build district capacity for implementing the new standards while promoting collaboration across all districts.

**Step 1: Educator
Advisory Teams**

- Review and discuss public website data
- Bring deep content knowledge and expertise
- Utilize these resources to refine, rewrite, and reorganize the standards

**Step 2: Standards
Recommendation
Committee**

- Review and discuss forms of public feedback data
- Represent numerous stakeholders, including educators
- Determine final revisions of standards and make recommendations to the State Board

**Step 3: Tennessee
State Board of
Education**

- Review proposed draft standards
- Consider presentations and recommendations made by previous bodies
- Make final revisions and adopt final versions of standards



Student Enrollment Rights

All children in the United States are entitled to equal access to a public education regardless of their actual or perceived race, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or the status of their parents/guardians. School districts that either prohibit, discourage, or maintain policies that have the effect of prohibiting or discouraging children from enrolling in schools because they or their parents/guardians are not U.S. citizens or are undocumented may be in violation of Federal law.

Below are some examples of acceptable enrollment policies, such as requesting proof of residency in the school district, as well as policies that may not be used by schools to deny enrollment to a child.

Proof of Residency in the School District

- School officials may request proof that someone lives within the boundaries of the school district. School districts typically accept a variety of documents for this purpose, such as copies of phone and water bills, lease agreements, affidavits, or other documents. A school district's requirements to establish residency must be applied in the same way for all children.
- A school district may not ask about the child's citizenship or immigration status of parents/guardians or children to establish residency within the district, nor may a school district deny a homeless child (including a homeless child who is undocumented) enrollment because he or she cannot provide the required documents to establish residency.
- While a school district may choose to include a parent's state-issued identification or driver's license among the documents that can be used to establish residency, a school district may not require such documentation to establish residency or for other purposes where such a requirement would unlawfully bar a student whose parents are undocumented from enrolling in school.

Proof of Age

- School officials may request documentation to show that a student falls within the school district's minimum and maximum age requirements. School districts typically accept a variety of documents for this purpose, such as a religious, hospital, or physician's certificate showing date of birth; an entry in a family bible; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; a birth certificate; or previously verified school records.
- Although a school district might request documents such as those listed above to verify a child's age, a school district may not prevent or discourage a child from enrolling in or attending school because he or she lacks a birth certificate or has records that indicate a foreign place of birth, such as a foreign birth certificate.

Social Security Numbers

- Some school districts request a student's social security number during enrollment to use as a student identification number. If a school district requests a student's social security number, it must: (1) inform the parent/guardian and child that providing it is voluntary and that refusing to provide it will not a child from enrolling in or attending school, and (2) explain for what purpose the number will be used.
- A school district may not prevent a child from enrolling in or attending school if a parent/guardian chooses not to provide the child's social security number.
- A school district may not require a parent/guardian to provide their own social security number for a child to enroll in or attend school.



Race or Ethnicity Data

- School districts have some federal and state obligations to report race and ethnicity data about the students in their schools. A school district may request a parent/guardian to provide their child's race or ethnicity for this purpose.
- However, a school district may not bar a child from enrolling the parent/guardian chooses not to provide their child's race or ethnicity.

To learn more about parent/guardian the rights of children when enrolling in public school, or if it is believed that a school district is violating federal law, contact the following government agencies:

- **Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section**
Telephone: (877) 292-3804 (toll-free)
Fax: (202) 514-8337
Email: education@usdoj.gov
- **U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights**
Telephone: (800) 421-3481 (toll-free)
Email: ocr@ed.gov
If you wish to fill out a complaint form online with the U.S. Department of Education, you may do so at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr/complaintintro.html>
- **U.S. Department of Education, Office of the General Counsel**
Telephone: (202) 401-6000
Fax: (202) 205-2689

State Enrollment Guidelines

All children in Tennessee must attend school between the ages of six and seventeen, inclusive. T.C.A. §§ 49-6-3001 and 49-6-3005 provide that the following children may be exempt from attendance law:

- Children mentally or physically incapacitated to perform school duties, with the disability attested to by a duly licensed physician in all cases
- Children who have completed high school and hold a high school diploma or other certificate of graduation
- Children enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a course of instruction leading to a high school equivalency diploma
- Children participating in a program of hospital or homebound instruction administered or approved by the school district
- Children six years of age or under whose parent or guardian have filed a notice of intent to conduct a home school as provided by T.C.A. § 49-6-3001 or who are conducting a home school as provided by T.C.A. § 49-6-3050
- Children enrolled in a home school who have reached 17 years of age
- Children who have attained their 17th birthday and whose continued compulsory attendance, in the opinion of the local board of education in charge of the school to which the children belong and are enrolled, results in detriment to good order and discipline and to the instruction of other students and is not of substantial benefit to the children.

Enrollment Outside of a Respective School District

Local boards of education may admit students from outside their respective local school district at any time and may arrange for the transfer of students residing within their district to other school districts by establishing



agreements with other local boards of education for the admission or transfer of students from one school district to another. The receiving board of education may set a time before or during the school year after which it will not accept transfer students. The receiving board of education may charge the non-resident student tuition to attend. If a local board of education otherwise permits non-resident students to transfer into its schools, it may not discriminate against any students solely on the grounds of their race, sex, national origin, or disability, nor may it charge such students a tuition over and above the usual tuition for students without disabilities.

State Requirements for Kindergarten Enrollment

Children entering kindergarten shall be five years of age on or before August 15. However, a child does not have to enroll in school at five years of age, but enrollment must occur no later than the beginning of the academic year following the child's sixth birthday. Any transfer student applying for admission who was legally enrolled in an approved kindergarten in another state and who will be five years of age no later than December 31 of the current school year shall be enrolled.

Additionally, T.C.A. § 49-6-3001 provides school districts some flexibility in allowing students who are close to the age cut-off to enroll in kindergarten early:

“If the director of schools finds through evaluation and testing, at the request of the parent or legal guardian, that a child who is five (5) years of age on or before September 30 is sufficiently mature emotionally and academically, then the child may be permitted to enter kindergarten.”

Given this, some districts will allow students to enroll early based on the flexibility in that law while other districts have different requirements, or simply don't allow exceptions. Parents/guardians can contact their local school district's office to determine whether there are any policies regarding early Kindergarten entrance. Parents/guardians may also ask if their local school district offers a voluntary Pre-K program as an alternative to early enrollment.



Summer Learning Programs

On January 22, 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly concluded its special legislative session on education, which addressed urgent issues facing Tennessee students and schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One piece of legislation that came out of this special session was the [Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act](#), which required all school districts in the state to offer summer learning programming for certain students beginning in Summer 2021. Public charter schools had the option to choose to conduct their own camps in accordance with the legislation or enroll their students in a camp conducted by the school district where the public charter school is located.

The legislation specified three different summer programs that districts were required to implement during the summers of 2021 and 2022:

- **Summer Learning Camps:** For students entering grades 1-5, with priority given to students eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and students who scored below proficient in ELA or math. Summer learning camps were required to provide six hours of programming per day (including in-person instruction, intervention, supplemental supports in reading and math, and other programming), five days per week for six weeks.
- **After-School Learning Mini-Camps:** These camps provided an additional hour of instruction immediately following the six hours of instruction provided through summer learning camps. The additional hour was required to use an educational approach to learning that focuses on science, technology, reading, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STREAM). Mini camps served the same student population as summer learning camps and were held at least four days per week.
- **Learning Loss Bridge Camps:** These camps served students entering grades 6-8 who scored below proficient in ELA or math on the most recent TCAP. Like the summer learning camps for grades 1-5, learning loss bridge camps were required to provide six hours of programming per day. However, learning loss bridge camps were held over four weeks rather than six weeks.

While Summer Learning Camps and After-School Learning Mini-Camps were required and funded only for the summers of 2021 and 2022, Learning Loss Bridge Camps are a permanent program. Beginning in the summer of 2023, Learning Loss Bridge Camps will serve students entering grades 4-8.



Teacher Code of Ethics

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-5-1001 *et seq.* contains the Teacher Code of Ethics, which is also copied into this document for reference. Teachers who violate the Teacher Code of Ethics could be subject to licensure discipline action. See “Licensure Discipline” in this guide for more information.

49-5-1001. Short title.

This part shall be known and may be cited as the "Teacher Code of Ethics."

History: Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1.

49-5-1002. Legislative findings.

The general assembly finds and declares that:

- (1) An educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. An educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards; and
- (2) An educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents and of the members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct.

History: Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1.

49-5-1003. Educator's obligations to students.

- (a) An educator shall strive to help each student realize the student's potential as a worthy and effective member of society. An educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.
- (b) In fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall:
 - (1) Abide by all applicable federal and state laws;
 - (2) Not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning;
 - (3) Provide the student with professional education services in a nondiscriminatory manner and in consonance with accepted best practices known to the educator;
 - (4) Respect the constitutional rights of the student;
 - (5) Not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view;
 - (6) Not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress;
 - (7) Make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety;
 - (8) Make reasonable effort to protect the emotional well-being of the student;
 - (9) Not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement;
 - (10) Not on the basis of race; color; creed; disability; sex; national origin; marital status; political or religious beliefs; family, social, or cultural background; or sexual orientation, unfairly:
 - (A) Exclude the student from participation in any program;
 - (B) Deny benefits to the student; or
 - (C) Grant any advantage to the student;
 - (11) Not use the educator's professional relationship with the student for private advantage;

- (12) Not disclose information about the student obtained in the course of the educator's professional service, unless disclosure of the information is permitted, serves a compelling professional purpose, or is required by law;
- (13) Not knowingly make false or malicious statements about students or colleagues;
- (14) Ensure interactions with the student take place in transparent and appropriate settings;
- (15) Not engage in any sexually related behavior with the student, whether verbal, written, physical, or electronic, with or without the student's consent. Sexually related behavior includes, but is not limited to, behaviors such as making sexual jokes or sexual remarks; engaging in sexual kidding, sexual teasing, or sexual innuendo; pressuring the student for dates or sexual favors; engaging in inappropriate physical touching, groping, or grabbing; kissing; rape; threatening physical harm; and committing sexual assault;
- (16) Not furnish alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs to the student;
- (17) Strive to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by the student when the student is under the educator's supervision on school or LEA premises, during school activities, or in any private setting;
- (18) Refrain from the use of alcohol while on school or LEA premises or during a school activity at which students are present; and
- (19) Maintain a professional approach with the student at all times.

History: Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1; 2018, ch. 937, § 1.

49-5-1004. Educator's obligations to the education profession.

- (a) The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service. In the belief that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens, the educator shall exert every effort to raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment, to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education, and to assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons.
- (b) In fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, an educator shall not:
 - (1) Deliberately make a false statement or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications in an application for a professional position;
 - (2) Misrepresent the educator's professional qualifications;
 - (3) Assist entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education, or other relevant attribute;
 - (4) Knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position;
 - (5) Assist a noneducator in the unauthorized practice of teaching;
 - (6) Disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless the disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law;
 - (7) Knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague;
 - (8) Accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions; and
 - (9) Use illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- (c) In fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, educators shall:
 - (1) Administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically; and
 - (2) Conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.



History: Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1; 2018, ch. 937, §§ 2, 3.

49-5-1005. Public access to teacher code of ethics.

The state board of education shall post the teacher code of ethics on its web site.

History: Acts 2011, ch. 214, § 1.

49-5-1006. Report of breach of teacher code of ethics -- Failure to report.

(a) An educator who has personal knowledge of a breach by another educator of the teacher code of ethics prescribed in §§ 49-5-1003 and 49-5-1004 shall report the breach to the educator's immediate supervisor, director of schools, or local board of education within thirty (30) days of discovering the breach.

(b) Failure to report a breach of the teacher code of ethics, or to file a report of any criminal activity or other misconduct that is required by federal or state law, is a breach of the teacher code of ethics.

History: Acts 2018, ch. 937, § 4.

49-5-1007. Professional development training concerning teacher code of ethics.

LEAs must conduct annual professional development training concerning the teacher code of ethics and its requirements. The professional development training shall address what constitutes unethical conduct.

History Acts: 2018, ch. 937, § 5.



Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation in Tennessee consists of frequent observations and constructive feedback for educators through multiple observations and pre- and post-conferences. Using the indicators of an educator evaluation rubric, such as the [Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model](#) (TEAM), educators work together to identify what is working well in the classroom (area of reinforcement), where there is room for improvement (area of refinement), and options for professional development to support continued growth. By using observations and data together, the TEAM rubric allows teachers and school leaders to have an ongoing dialogue about how what's going on in the classroom is impacting student performance. Ultimately, growth in teachers' skills will lead to growth in student achievement.

History

In July 2011, Tennessee became one of the first states in the country to implement a comprehensive, statewide educator evaluation system that incorporated student outcomes. This implementation was a key tenet of Tennessee's First to the Top Act, adopted by the General Assembly with bipartisan support during 2010's extraordinary session under the backdrop of the federal Race to the Top competition. This landmark legislation established the parameters of a new teacher and principal evaluation system and committed to implementation during the 2011-12 school year.

In December 2014, the General Assembly passed legislation to adjust and improve Tennessee's teacher evaluation law; this action was based on the results of the governor gathering educator feedback regarding the TNReady assessment.

The TEAM rubric is modeled after the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching's (NIET) evaluation model. The rubric is based on research and best practices from multiple sources. NIET studied and reviewed instructional guidelines and standards developed by numerous national and state teacher standard organizations and developed a comprehensive set of standards represented in the rubric. The research that informed the development of the TEAM model is available [here](#).

Evaluation Overview

Tennessee's teacher evaluation system is based on multiple measures as outlined in T.C.A. § 49-1-302, including student achievement data (60%) which is composed of student growth data/TVAAS (35%) and other measures of student achievement selected from a list adopted by the State Board (25%). Every teacher is evaluated regardless of years of service or tenure status. Evaluation scoring differentiates teachers into five effectiveness levels:

1. Significantly Below Expectations
2. Below Expectations
3. Meets Expectations
4. Above Expectations
5. Significantly Above Expectations

Classroom observations are scored using a rubric that outlines clear expectations of high-quality instruction, planning, classroom environment and professionalism. Observation requirements vary based on teachers having a practitioner or professional license as well as their prior performance.



Components of Measurement

The TEAM evaluation includes both qualitative and quantitative measures of teaching quality. The three components of the TEAM evaluation are observations, achievement, and growth. These three components come together to comprise an educator's overall Level of Effectiveness (LOE) score. Each school year, educators receive an LOE score ranging from 1 to 5. The LOE score has implications for tenure eligibility and professional development points. Score calculations differ by educator type due to variations in the weighting of TEAM evaluation components. Educator types include tested teachers with prior data, tested teachers without prior data, non-tested teachers, and teachers using a portfolio model.

Textbook and Instructional Materials

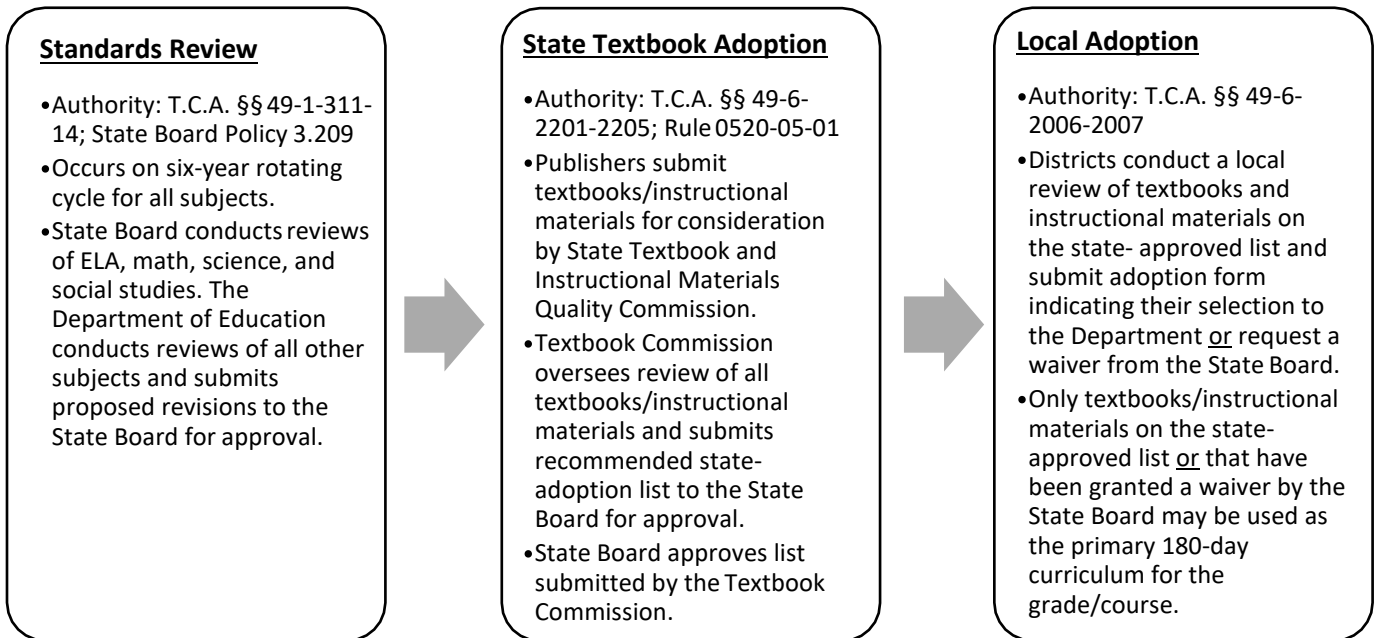
The Tennessee General Assembly develops and passes legislation related to the adoption of textbooks and instructional materials for kindergarten through grade 12 public schools. The General Assembly established the State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission (Textbook Commission) through the appointment of commissioners by the speakers of the Senate and House and the governor.

The Textbook Commission’s responsibilities include:

- Preparing and recommending a list of standard edition textbooks for approval by the State Board for use in the public schools of the state.
- Publishing the list of state approved textbooks.
- Developing rules for the bidding and contracting of textbook and instructional materials programs.
- Overseeing the review of programs bid against the education standards approved by the State Board.
- Establishing contracts with publishers.
- Approving the process and time frame for state review of textbooks and instructional materials.

The Department of Education provides administrative assistance to the Textbook Commission and maintains the Textbook Services [website](#).

Textbook Adoption Process



State Board Textbook/Instructional Material Waiver Process

Public Chapter 770 of 2020 transferred authority for issuing textbook and instructional materials waivers from the Department of Education to the State Board and [Public Chapter 471 of 2021](#) further refined this law. The textbook/instructional materials waiver application and review process is outlined in [State Board Rule 0520-01-18](#). Textbook/instructional materials waivers are only applicable to materials a school district uses as the primary



instructional vehicle for a subject and are not applicable to supplementary materials. School districts may obtain a waiver from the State Board through the following steps:

1. The school district requests a waiver application from State Board staff (email Catherine.Johnson@tn.gov). State Board staff will walk the school district through the application process and provide examples.
2. School district staff complete the waiver application and submit online.
3. State Board staff review the application to ensure it is complete. Staff may ask the school district to provide additional information.
4. State Board staff request the assistance of the Department's subject-matter expert in the relevant content area. The subject-matter expert completes a review rubric provided by the State Board staff. **By rule, this review may take up to 90 calendar days.**
5. State Board staff develop a recommendation based on the subject-matter expert's rubric as well as additional factors laid out in Rule 0520-01-18.
6. The recommendation is presented to the State Board members for a vote at the next State Board meeting. State Board staff will inform the school district of the results of the vote.
 - The school district should not purchase or begin using the textbooks and instructional materials until the State Board has voted to approve the waiver.

Restrictions on Potential Waiver Materials

There are several statutory restrictions on the types of textbooks and instructional materials for which the State Board is permitted to grant waivers.

1. **Standards Alignment:** T.C.A. § 49-6-2206 states that: "The state board shall not grant a waiver for English language arts, math, science, or social studies textbooks or instructional materials that are not aligned to Tennessee's academic standards beginning on:
 - (A) January 1, 2023, for English language arts;
 - (B) July 1, 2023, for math;
 - (C) July 1, 2024, for science; and
 - (D) July 1, 2025, for social studies."

Due to this requirement, the State Board cannot approve waiver requests for materials if the materials are not aligned to Tennessee's academic standards, if those materials will be in use after the dates mentioned in the law.

2. **Common Core State Standards:** Tennessee law states that "A teacher or principal in any of the public schools of this state shall not use or permit to be used in the person's school, whether as a supplement to the [school district's] or school's adopted textbooks and instructional materials or otherwise, textbooks or instructional materials created to align exclusively with the Common Core State Standards or that are marketed as Common Core textbooks or materials."

This law applies to both textbooks and instructional materials and supplemental materials and resources. School districts must certify on the waiver application form that the proposed textbooks and instructional materials meet the requirements of this statute.

3. **Teaching on Specific Topics:** Tennessee law lists a number of specific topics that are prohibited from being taught in public schools or public charter schools.



School districts must certify on the waiver application form that the proposed textbooks and instructional materials meet the requirements of this statute; or, if the proposed textbooks and instructional materials violate this law, how the school district will ensure the portion(s) of the materials in violation of the law are not taught in the school district and provide evidence of any supplemental materials used in place of the materials in violation.

Tennessee laws and State Board rules prohibit the use of unapproved textbooks and instructional materials absent a waiver. School districts may not begin using requested waiver materials until the State Board has voted to approve the waiver request. School districts should refer to the timeline for State Board waiver reviews above and plan their waiver requests and instructional programming accordingly.

Virtual Schools and Virtual Education Program Considerations

Courses taught through virtual schools and/or virtual education programs must comply with all laws and rules regarding textbooks and instructional materials.

School districts must request waivers from the State Board to use textbooks or instructional materials, including online course modules, that are not on the state-approved list. T.C.A. § 49-6-2202(e) specifically defines textbook as including “‘electronic textbook’ or ‘electronic textbooks,’ which means computer software, interactive videodisc, magnetic media, CD-ROM, computer courseware, local and remote computer assisted instruction, online service, electronic medium or other means of conveying information to the student or otherwise contributing to the learning process through electronic means.” School districts should be prepared to provide access to any online modules for the Department’s subject-matter experts to review.

Charter School Considerations

Charter schools may request textbook and instructional materials waivers from either their authorizer or the Commissioner of Education pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-111. Waivers for charter schools are not handled by the State Board. Charter schools must be aware of and comply with all relevant statutes regarding textbooks and instructional materials unless a waiver is granted under T.C.A. § 49-13-111.



Third Grade Retention Law

As detailed in T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, a student in the third grade shall not be promoted to the next grade unless the student is determined to be proficient in English language arts (ELA) based on achieving a performance level rating of “on track” or “mastered” on the ELA portion of the most recent TCAP test.

A student who earned a performance level rating of “approaching” on the ELA portion of the most recent TCAP test may only be promoted if one of the following applies:

- The student is an English language learner and has received less than two (2) years of ELA instruction;
- The student was previously retained at least once in kindergarten through third grade;
- The student retested before the beginning of the next school year and scores “on track” or “mastered” in ELA;
- The student attends a learning loss bridge camp before the beginning of the upcoming school year, maintains a 90% attendance rate at the camp, and demonstrates adequate growth on the post-test administered at the end of the camp; or
- The student is assigned a tutor through the Tennessee accelerating literacy and learning corps for the entirety of the upcoming school year.

A student who earned a performance level rating of “below” on the ELA portion of the most recent TCAP test may only be promoted if one of the following applies:

- The student is an English language learner and has received less than two (2) years of ELA instruction;
- The student was previously retained at least once in kindergarten through third grade;
- The student retested before the beginning of the next school year and scores “on track” or “mastered” in ELA; or
- The student attends a learning loss bridge camp before the beginning of the upcoming school year, maintains a 90% attendance rate at the camp, and the student is assigned a tutor through the Tennessee accelerating literacy and learning corps for the entirety of the upcoming school year.

If a third-grade student at risk of retention is promoted to fourth grade because of any of the outcomes defined above, the student must show growth on the fourth grade ELA portion of the TCAP test to be promoted to the fifth grade. A student cannot be retained in the fourth grade more than once. Additionally, a student may not be retained based on a documented or suspected disability.

Identifying Students At-Risk of Retention

State Board Policy 3.300 states schools must identify students who demonstrate difficulty in achieving the requirements for promotion to the next grade level and may be at risk of retention by February 1, except in limited situations. Factors that may be used to determine if a student is at risk of retention include results of local assessments, state assessments, overall academic achievement, likelihood of success with more difficult material in the next grade, attendance, and social and emotional maturity.

If a student is considered for retention, the school must notify the parent or guardian within 15 calendar days of identification. The school shall develop and implement an individualized promotion plan to help the student avoid retention. The plan shall be developed with the student’s teacher(s) and may also include input from parents, counselors, and/or other appropriate school staff. Plans shall include strategies tailored to the student’s learning needs and set expectations and measurements to determine if the student has made sufficient progress.



Strategies may include special education services for students who qualify, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²), modification and personalization of instruction, extending learning time, attendance supports, tutoring, or other personalized programming. A copy of the plan shall be provided to the parent or guardian within 10 days of its development.



Virtual Education

Public Virtual Schools

A public virtual school is a public school that uses technology to deliver a significant portion of instruction to its students via the internet in a virtual or remote setting. Public virtual schools may be established in accordance with T.C.A. §§ 49-16-201-216 and the rules and regulations of the State Board. The school district establishing the public virtual school is directly responsible for the performance of the school and ensuring the school remains in compliance with state and federal laws and State Board rules.

State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.05 outlines many of the public virtual school requirements including academic standards, instructional time, assessments, evaluation, serving students with special needs, educator requirements, class size, attendance, and enrollment.

Virtual Education Programs

A virtual education program means a course or series of courses offered using technology by a school district or public charter school to provide students with a broader range of educational opportunities. Virtual education program use includes academic remediation or enrichment or continuity of education for students who are homebound, quarantined, or enrolled in an alternative school pursuant to State Board rule. These are virtual course offerings that a student enrolled in a Tennessee public school takes for specific, limited courses during the school year, while taking the majority of other courses in-person at their assigned school.

Instruction via a virtual education program shall not constitute most of the student's total instructional time per school semester unless the student meets one of the following criteria:

- The student is temporarily receiving all instruction due to one of the continuities of education uses described above.
- The student is taking coursework virtually so the student may participate in a work-based learning program or internship that takes place during regular school hours.
- The student is accessing Advanced Placement (AP) courses virtually.
- The student is taking virtual coursework for the purposes of credit recovery.

State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.05 outlines the enrollment, criteria for participation, absences, course offerings, accountability, educator requirements, access to technology, and serving students with special needs.