

Knox County Schools

October 2013

Benchmarks

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Noteworthy News about KCS



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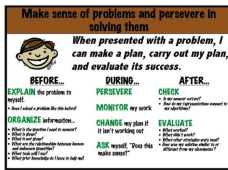
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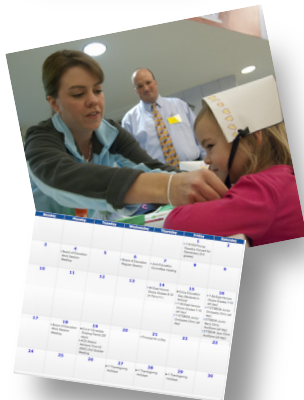


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Community Input Continues for Strategic Plan

The journey to provide *Excellence for All Children* began in 2008 with the creation of the Knox County Schools' ambitious five-year strategic plan. Five years later, the Knox County Schools is in the process of creating the next iteration of its strategic plan and vision, dubbed "**Knox Schools 2020.**" Critical to its success is the insight, input and feedback from teachers, students, parents and the community.

The Knox County Schools is continuing its series of "Insight Sessions" to allow the public an opportunity to provide input into the strategic planning process. Through November, the Knox County Schools will proactively reach out to stakeholders to specifically ask



What's good? How has the school district performed during the past five years, since the inception of the first strategic plan? Where were improvements made?
What's not? Are there continual challenges or lack of progress in certain areas?
What's next? What should the Knox County Schools focus and prioritize on in the next five years?

Insight Sessions are open to the public, and

childcare is provided. Previous Insight Sessions have been held at South-Doyle Middle School, Carter Middle School, Farragut High School and Karns High School. Remaining sessions include

October 29—6 p.m. at Austin-East Magnet High School (2800

Martin L. King, Jr. Avenue)

*November 14—6 p.m. at Gresham Middle School (500 Gresham Road)

*November 21—6 p.m. at Bearden High School (8352 Kingston Pike)

*These sessions will present findings from the October Insight Sessions for further reaction and feedback from the community.

For those who cannot attend Insight Sessions and to keep stakeholders informed about the strategic planning process, the Knox County Schools invites community members to "follow" on Twitter at [@knoxschools2020](https://twitter.com/knoxschools2020); visit knoxschools2020.org; and e-mail comments to knoxschools2020@knoxschools.org.



Launch of TutorTN Provides Knox County Students Free Online Tutoring

A new online tutoring service, called TutorTN, now is available to students in the Knox County Schools. Students simply visit www.tutor.com/TutorTN and enter their Knox County Public Library card numbers to connect with expert tutors for one-to-one homework help or tutoring sessions in online classrooms.



Students who do not yet have Knox County Public Library cards can use a password provided by the Knox County Schools to access the site. This password is available by contacting your child's school.

Once students log onto the service, they select grade levels and subjects. Students then input their questions or upload problems to share with tutors, who work with the students in online classrooms where they can text, use interactive whiteboards or share documents. Students who sign up for optional free accounts can share their sessions via e-mail and review them later. The new program is funded by the Tennessee State Library and Archives and is available to all Knox County students through the end of the current school year. If the program is successful, the State Library and Archives hopes to expand the service to all Tennessee students in fall 2014 through the [Tennessee Electronic Library](#).

The TutorTN pilot project in Knox County is available 3-10 p.m., seven days a week. Students can use computers, mobile phones and tablets to access the system. [Tutor.com](http://www.tutor.com), the largest online tutoring service in the country, has a community of almost 3,000 tutors who can help in all core academic subjects. Students can even connect to writing tutors to review papers, reports and essays.

Secretary of State Tre Hargett launched TutorTN in September 2013. To see a video on how the online tutoring service works, please visit <http://youtu.be/Nb4EKtQg-XQ>.

Farragut High School's Wanda Lacy Named Tennessee Teacher of the Year



A teacher known for leading student, department and district collaboration was named the 2013-14 [Teacher of the Year](#) by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Wanda Napier Lacy, an Advanced Placement (AP) calculus teacher at [Farragut High School](#), is a 30-year veteran educator who was inspired to teach because her parents didn't have the opportunity to earn a college education. Lacy received the state's top teaching honor during the annual Teacher of the Year banquet in Nashville on Oct. 4, 2013.

"The Teacher of the Year awards not only allow us to recognize some of the best teachers in the state, but they also provide an opportunity to share and learn from [the educators'] inspired, effective methods of instruction," Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman said.

During her six years as the AP calculus teacher at Farragut High School, every one of Lacy's students has taken the AP calculus exam, and 97 percent have earned college credit.

Knox County Schools Mathematics Supervisor Gary Petko describes Lacy's AP calculus results as some of the top scores in the state, and Farragut High School Principal Mike Reynolds believes he knows one reason why. "She moves students past seeking only the correct answers and on to the 'why' of learning," said Reynolds.

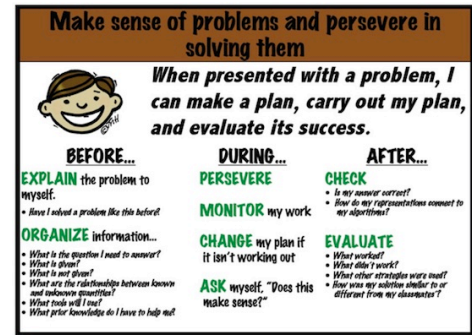
Lacy's teaching philosophy centers on high expectations for every student and maximizing individual mathematics ability. Students in her classes regularly work together to investigate, analyze and solve problems with real-world applications.

After returning from the Teacher of the Year banquet in Nashville, a surprise was awaiting Lacy. Students and teachers from the math department at Farragut High School had created a banner including handwritten personal messages. Lacy was presented the banner during a surprise ceremony at the school that day.

Common Core State Standards: Focus on Math

Helping students learn more deeply and apply knowledge more successfully, express themselves through effective writing and read for understanding are goals of the [Common Core State Standards](#), a roadmap to help students be more prepared for college and career. This year, the Knox County Schools is fully implementing the standards in grades K-12.

Benchmarks will spend the next few months looking into each main academic area (math, English/language arts, social studies, sciences, humanities and career and technical education) to explain how Common Core is expressed and how parents can best support your student at home.

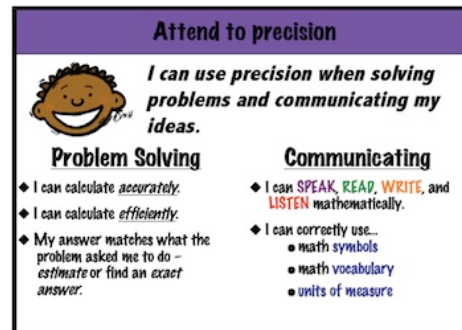


Math

Common Core State Standards for [mathematical practice](#) establish the following goals for your student:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
4. Model with mathematics
5. Use appropriate tools strategically
6. Attend to precision
7. Look for and make use of structure
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning

It's clear that students aren't just learning how to complete math equations; they also are learning to understand why the numbers work together and how that relates to the real world. For example, in No. 1 above, students learn to make a plan, carry out the plan and evaluate its success. Those are real-world skills! (Please see Diagram 1.) Using No. 3, students are learning to listen, compare arguments, identify flawed logic and ask questions when they critique the reasoning of others. No. 4 has direct links to everyday life. Students learn to recognize math in day-to-day situations and use math to solve everyday problems.



These math goals also help students familiarize themselves with using math tools, solve problems accurately and communicate mathematically. Students are learning to find patterns and organization and work efficiently. In short, through the Common Core State Standards for mathematical practice, students are learning math more successfully and how to use it in everyday life.

Parents might be noticing increased math rigor, and resources are available to help you help your child. A new online tutoring service, [TutorTN](#), is available to your student seven days a week, 3-10 p.m. [See related story, Pg.3.] Also, take advantage of the resources on the Knox County Schools website: [knoxschools.org](#). Your child's teacher is always a good resource for ways to support your student at home. If you have additional questions regarding Common Core, please email us at commoncore@knoxschools.org.

Next month: English/Language Arts

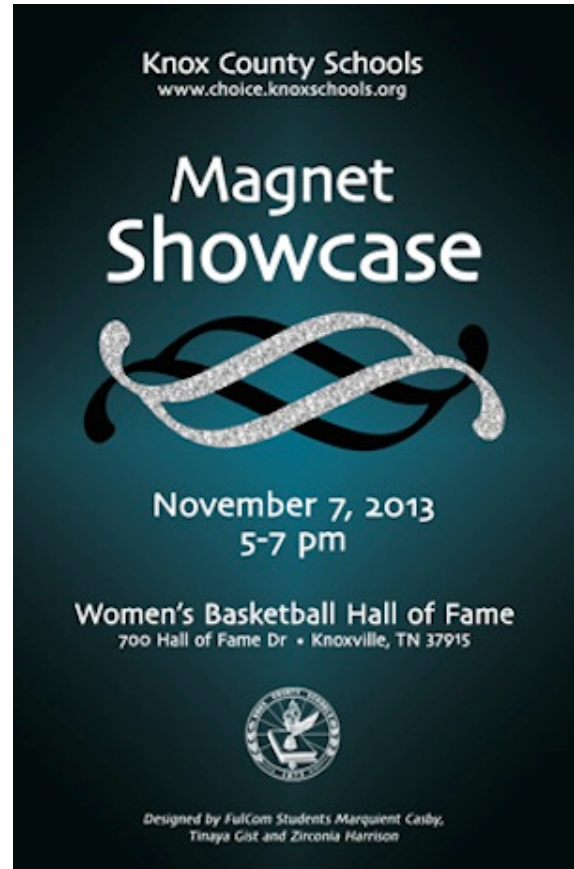
Magnet Showcase Scheduled for Nov. 7

The Knox County Schools announces its annual [Magnet Showcase](http://www.choice.knoxschools.org), set for Thursday, Nov. 7, at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame (700 Hall of Fame Drive). The showcase gives parents and community members an opportunity to learn about all nine magnet schools in the Knox County Schools, including the new magnet career academy to open in August 2014 on the Pellissippi State Community College Strawberry Plains campus. At the showcase, each magnet school will have information available about the school's program, eligibility and more.

Magnet schools provide unique learning opportunities in specific areas or themes not offered in full at other Knox County Schools. Magnet programs are committed to increasing educational opportunities for students while promoting students' interests, abilities and talents.

Additionally, open house dates have been scheduled for each Knox County magnet school. Teachers, administrators and magnet staff will be available to provide tours and answer questions about specific programs available at each school.

For a list of open house dates as well as more information about the Knox County Schools magnet program, please visit [choice.knoxschools.org](http://www.choice.knoxschools.org), or call the Knox County Schools Magnet Office at 865-594-1731.



Project Already Helping ‘Awesome Teachers’ Perfect Their Craft



South-Doyle Middle School Principal and Leadership Academy graduate Beth Blevins' experience going to Shanghai and being able to see the implementation of teacher collaboration was phenomenal.

"I first have to brag on our Knox County Schools," said Blevins. "What it has taken Shanghai ten years to establish within a culture where education is highly valued, we have begun to create in three schools in a little over two months.

"In Shanghai, teachers work together to identify what they will prioritize for a lesson and what it will look like when students master the skill(s). Then, a group of teachers watch the implementation of the lesson and provide the instructor with feedback regarding what was effective and what could be improved," explained Blevins. "This is what is happening in three schools in Knox County right now!"

At South-Doyle Middle School, the 6th grade English/Language Arts team and the 7th grade math team co-create a lesson, observe implementation, then adjust the lesson based on feedback from the observation. "This is what I call a 'PLC on steroids'", said Blevins. "It utilizes the heart and soul of the classroom - the teacher - to ensure lessons provided to students are rigorous and effective. I am thrilled to be a part of this pilot and watch awesome teachers continue to perfect their craft!" PLCs are Professional Learning Communities made up of collaborating teachers.

About the Tennessee-Shanghai Collaborative

*The Tennessee-Shanghai Leadership Collaborative, developed by researchers at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of education and human development, is providing a forum for principals to learn about a cooperative approach to pedagogy used in Shanghai city schools. The program will support implementation of **Teacher Peer Excellence Groups (TPEG)** in a wide variety of school contexts across Tennessee.*

The goal is to transform professional practice through collaborative lesson planning, peer observation of instructional practices and sharing feedback for growth. Principals will take this international exemplary practice and personalize it for their own school communities.

Elementary and middle school principals serving in urban and rural school districts in the Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville areas were selected for the Tennessee-Shanghai Leadership Collaborative, which is funded by a \$700,000 TN LEAD grant from the Tennessee Department of Education. The grant is one of eight comprising a nearly \$4 million investment of Race to the Top funds to improve the quality of instruction and levels of student performance in more than 20 Tennessee school districts.

Knox County was selected to participate and Principals Beth Blevins, South-Doyle Middle School, Cindy Bosse, A. L. Lotts, and Alisha Hinton, Sequoyah Elementary are taking part in this exchange.

During the week of September 14-21, program participants and Peabody faculty traveled to Shanghai for one week to observe and learn from educators at East China Normal University's Institute of Schooling Reform and Development, a key national research center on K-12 education effectiveness. Participants will implement what they have learned in Tennessee classrooms.

Collaborative creates unique professional growth opportunity

“Sequoyah Elementary’s partnership with Vanderbilt University and the TNLead Collaborative has created a unique professional growth opportunity for our teachers,” said Sequoyah Principal and Leadership Academy graduate Alisha Hinton. “Through this pilot project, teachers have been given the opportunity to purposefully collaborate through shared lesson planning, peer observation and feedback, and lesson refinement. This teaching and feedback cycle is like no other professional growth model.”

As they began the school year, Sequoyah teachers were committed to partnering together and trusting one another as they explored this new teacher collaborative model. “As we’ve progressed through the first semester, we have discovered how to fit this model to our needs as a school and at specific grade levels,” Hinton explains. “Teachers are now discussing high-quality instructional

strategies with purpose and providing professional feedback following peer observations. The doors between our classrooms have been opened to one another and a culture of trust and collaboration is developing.”

Part of this collaboration with Vanderbilt and TNLead includes working with colleagues from five other school districts across the state of Tennessee. Each of the eighteen schools is committed to supporting instructional development across our schools through the Teacher Peer Educator Group (TPEG) model”. (see sidebar story “About the Tennessee-Shanghai Collaborative). This project has broken down barriers to teacher development and offered new insight into international models of teacher collaboration.

“During our visit and observations in Shanghai, participating principals were able to learn from our international colleagues,” said Hinton. “While the (TPEG) model has been utilized for many years throughout China, its simplicity seems drastically different than our own way of professional and instructional development.”

While observing the TPEG model in Shanghai, the principals were able to experience the outcomes of improved instruction and collaboration because of this model. “It is our goal to integrate and refine this new professional growth model so that our teachers improve their pedagogy and through this growth increase student content mastery and understanding,” said Hinton.

“All Children Smile in the Same Language”

“It was exciting to see how schools in Shanghai are using this model to constantly improve teaching and learning,” said A. L. Lotts Principal



Alisha Hinton (second from left), Beth Blevins, and Cindy Bosse with students in Shanghai.



Cindy Bosse. "Teachers observe each other frequently in their school and then meet to provide feedback to the teacher, noting what went really well in the lesson and giving suggestions for making the lesson even better. They are hungry for effective feedback. When they realized teachers in the USA don't typically have that built into their schedule they sadly asked, 'Well, how do they grow?'"

"I have long recognized the value of teachers observing each other and had provided occasional opportunities for that to happen as a principal," said Bosse. "This implementation project is exciting because it is a systematic way to insure it happens on an on-going basis."

Teachers are also able to refine lesson plans based on actionable feedback. There is latitude within each school to customize the model to fit each school's needs. The teachers at A.L. Lotts have embraced this and are using their professional judgment to ensure a good fit.



"It was a wonderful opportunity to travel to China to see firsthand how the system works," added Bosse. "

While our public education system has many, many strengths this is one area where we can definitely learn from them."

"We are committed to being life-long learners and to doing whatever is best for students," added Bosse.

Being around the Chinese children was a real treat. "While culture varied tremendously, I was reminded while in Shanghai that children all smile in the same language!"

Adult Education Program Celebrates New Facility

The Knox County Schools [Adult Education Program](#) recently moved into a new facility in Knoxville Center Mall and celebrated the move with an open house. The renovated space is 7,500 square feet and provides seven classrooms, a computer lab, a teacher workroom and three offices. Technology will be incorporated into the curriculum as a teaching tool.

“I’m excited to provide this space—and this support—for our adult students who are seeking further education to support their future goals. These renovations demonstrate this community’s commitment to educate all students,” said Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools.

“This is the model program for the state of Tennessee, and this is probably the finest facility in the state,” said Marva Doremus, Administrator of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development Adult Education Program.

Located upstairs near JCPenney in the Knoxville Center Mall, the Adult Education Program is adjacent to the Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy. Classes in the Adult Education Program are open to anyone 17 years and older, with documentation required for 17 and 18 year olds. Students progress at their own pace through the program in classes geared to their educational needs to obtain an HSE (high school-equivalency) diploma and be prepared for further education, if desired.

The program is funded through the Knox County Schools and the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development and is free of charge for students.

[See KCS-TV’s SPOTLIGHT VIDEO on Adult Education](#)



Located upstairs near JCPenney in the Knoxville Center Mall, the Adult Education Program is adjacent to the Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy.



Adult Ed Programs: Adult Education, Adult High School, Kelley Volunteer Academy

Adult Education Program

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Adult High School

The Knox County Schools Adult High School offers adult students the opportunity to earn a Tennessee State high school diploma to raise academic skill levels and to prepare for the work force or post-secondary education through self-paced, computer-assisted instruction and small classes. Day and evening programs are available. The Adult High School is located at 3001 Knoxville Center Mall Road, Suite 2297. For information, call 865-525-0069 or visit kcahs.knoxschools.org.

Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy

Kelley Volunteer Academy is a non-traditional high school serving approximately 200 students in grades 11 and 12 who represent all high schools in the Knox County Schools. The mission of the academy is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for students to learn, grow and advance both socially and academically through individualized educational programs, career initiatives and community partnerships. The academy is located at 3001 Knoxville Center Drive, Suite 2297. For more information, call 865-525-0069 or visit kelleyvolunteerac.knoxschools.org.

Technology already making a difference

All of the technology devices have now been delivered to the 11 School Technology Challenge grant winners, but already, the challenge is making a difference in teaching and learning in the Knox County Schools.



“Our 8th graders have done so well having these technology tools,” said **Vine Middle Magnet** Principal Cindy White. “Their behavior has changed, they are prideful, they take care of the technology and are very engaged in the classroom. The kids finally have the tools they need to learn and to function in today’s world.”

Each student has a MacBook Pro to take home and use. Special backpacks were purchased to help protect the laptops from the usual hustle and bustle of a student’s active life. The students take them home, bring them back and are ready to go. “When they walk into the classroom, they are ready to go to work; they want to use them,” observed White.

White offered a math class as an example. “I walked into a math classroom yesterday and they were doing an interactive activity about slope. Students were using their laptops in groups of two and having a conversation about what they were doing in regards to slope. The teacher was basically just facilitating,” said White.



Before the introduction of the technology, the teacher would have been lecturing in front of the classroom, giving a formula and telling them about slope or maybe using a Smartboard. Now, because they have the technology tools right at their fingertips, the kids are exploring the math and doing the work.

In Vine Middle Magnet’s dance class, students were scattered all about the dance floor in groups of two or three or on their own using their laptops to evaluate their own performances.

“The 8th grade used it to evaluate themselves,” said dance instructor Sarah Hobbs. “They would record themselves doing the combination and then watch it and talk about what they did well and what they needed to work on.” The students will eventually use the technology to create their own choreography.

Parents have been very supportive of the technology. All but a few were able to come to the first deployment date, and those few who could not attend came on makeup days to receive training on the technology with their students.



Teachers are learning that the technology is not just a note-taking device. With the help of TPACK coaches, teachers are using the technology to create interactive lessons through Canvas. Canvas is the new system-wide Learning Management System.



At Sterchi Elementary, Principal Christine Boring has seen a change in the way students participate in projects since the technology has been put in place. Students in project based learning groups must each contribute to the total project.

“The students are sharing documents so that everyone can see them,” said Boring. “Everybody in the group participates in the project. Everybody has something they are going to have to share with the others.” Boring noted that the students have moved from just talking ‘about’ something to finding ways to ‘present’ it,” she observed. “The students are asking themselves ‘How do I present it’ or ‘how do I know to go through the project step by step.’ The kids are learning how to present and as a result they have a much deeper understanding of the material – they know it backwards and forwards.”

Unlike the middle school where each student has an individual device, the elementary schools have five iPads in each Kindergarten through grade 2, five laptops in each grade 3, and technology devices in grades 4 and 5. “The challenge is moving kids from one kind of device to another,” observed Boring, “but the benefit is that they will be familiar with many devices as they move through school. Even at the elementary level, they will have many opportunities to prepare them for college and career.”



Parents are involved in “PBL Nights” – Project Based Learning – and special nights to introduce them to the new Canvas Learning Management System. Boring noted that many of their parents have limited technical skills as well, so the school has plans to help the parents learn. They display for the parents the various technologies used in PBL. During a recent ‘meet and greet’ session, QR codes provided links to interesting facts about the school, the staff, and the community. The parents’ reactions? “This is really fun! I can’t wait to come back.”

Having the ability to create movies for reading instruction pays a quick dividend. “One of the things I’m excited about is the ability to create individual instruction,” explains Boring. “Teachers can begin individualizing for students who are struggling with certain skills. They can put the instructional videos on the student’s iPad and the student can work on that skill while the teacher is conducting a group session.”

With a diversity of reading abilities in the classroom, the use of individual lessons has multiplied the teacher by five because she can be vocally helping a slow reader learn sounds and words while at the same time teaching her reading group.



“This is where we start changing the game for students,” said Boring. “We always wanted to work toward every child’s ability and what they needed to work on, and now we can do it better.”

Of course, teachers are still a bit nervous because making the best use of the technology is new and challenging, but it’s still exciting. Teachers gather every Thursday to learn something new about the technology or a new application. They share and each becomes a leader during the sessions.

All the students’ quizzes are on the new Learning Management System – the kids take the tests on the computer – so they are learning to scroll down, manage the test and so on. This will prepare them for the online Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers PARCC test coming statewide.

Haslam Committed to Increase Teacher Pay

In an Oct. 3 announcement, Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam joined Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman to announce the [administration's goal](#) of becoming the fastest improving state in the nation when it comes to teacher salaries.

"We're asking our students to be the fastest improving in the nation in education achievement, and the data is showing that we're making real progress," Haslam said. "Teachers are the single most important factor in student achievement, and higher accountability for teachers and proven results should be met with better rewards."

During the Haslam administration's first years in office, the state has seen three consecutive years of growth in TCAP results, including the largest TCAP gains in Tennessee history last year. TCAP results also show Tennessee has 91,000 more students on grade-level math and more than 50,000 more on grade-level in science.

"This is a long-term goal, and I think it is one of the most important ones we've taken on," Haslam added. "We are committed to investing in our educators and working in partnership with the General Assembly and our local school districts to examine where we are every year, track our progress against other states and make investment decisions that will move Tennessee forward."

Haslam and the General Assembly have committed more than \$130 million during the past three years in new, recurring funds for teacher salaries, translating into the average Tennessee teacher earning \$50,000 per year.

The governor and legislature have also worked together to increase overall education funding by more than \$400 million. In that time, the average teacher pay in Tennessee has improved at twice the national average, according to state and National Education Association statistics.

Knox County Schools to Host “Principal for a Day” Nov. 21

On Nov. 21, Knox County business and community leaders will have the opportunity to spend a day visiting the 89 schools in the Knox County Schools through the district’s Principal for a Day program. This initiative, outlined in the Knox County Schools Strategic Plan, brings together a broad range of government, community and business leaders to participate in a half-day experience shadowing school principals. These guest “principals” will



meet school administrators, visit classrooms, interact with support staff and see the life of a school from inside the school walls.

At the conclusion of the time in the schools, Principal for a Day guests have the opportunity to attend a luncheon with Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools, at which they will be encouraged to share their experiences and provide feedback on their observations.

As Principal for a Day in November 2012, Commissioner Brad Anders visited Hardin Valley Elementary School.

Knox County Schools Hosts Annual Parent Conference and Transition Fair

Parents and education professionals attended content-rich workshops, a general session and a keynote presentation at the 2013 [Parent Conference and Transition Fair](#), Oct. 12 at Central High School. Entitled “Discovering Treasures of Success,” the conference included more than 30 sessions on supporting student academic success, Common Core State Standards, building resilience in children, helping children with homework, preparing for college, understanding standardized tests, helping struggling learners, building a meaningful life and much more.



Keynote speaker at the conference was Deborah Gilboa, M.D., aka “Doctor G,” a Pittsburgh-based family physician, parenting expert, international speaker and author and mom of four boys. Gilboa captivated audience members with her wit and sound advice centered on “Resilience: How to Give Kids this Key to Success.”



Attendees also were able to speak face to face with experts from the Knox County Schools and community organizations at a parent help desk and exhibitor area.

The goal of the Parent Conference and Transition Fair was to help parents become more effective school-home partners to strengthen student academic success. This year, to engage more parents, the Parent Conference for all parents was combined with the Knox County Schools Transition Fair for parents of students with disabilities.

The 2013 conference was free of charge for attendees, thanks in part to sponsors: Knoxville Parent, Great Schools Partnerships and Knox County Council PTA. Additionally, Shades of Development provided child care at no cost.

For more information about Family and Community Engagement, please contact Tracey Matthews at 594-9525 or visit engagement.knoxschools.org.



Important Dates and Information

Insight Session

Oct. 29, 6 p.m., Austin-East Magnet High School
(2800 Martin L. King, Jr. Avenue)

Knox County Schools Original Coupon Book Campaign Celebration

Nov. 6, 11:30 a.m., Sarah Simpson Professional Development Center (801 Tipton Avenue)

Board of Education Regular Session

Nov. 6, 5 p.m., City County Building, Main Assembly Room (400 West Main Street)

Magnet Showcase

Nov. 7, 5-7 p.m., Women's Basketball Hall of Fame (700 Hall of Fame Drive)

Board of Education Work Session

Nov. 18, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building, First Floor Boardroom (912 South Gay Street)

End 4 ½ Weeks Grading Period

November 19

Thanksgiving Holidays

Nov. 27-29 (no school for students)

Board of Education Work Session

Dec. 2, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building, First Floor Boardroom (912 South Gay Street)

Board of Education Regular Session

Dec. 4, 5 p.m., City County Building, Main Assembly Room (400 West Main Street)

Board of Education Called Meeting

Dec. 16, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building, First Floor Boardroom (912 South Gay Street)

