

Benchmarks

Noteworthy News for KCS Employees



If it Snows . . .



CTE Magnet



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Profiles of Success:

Gresham Middle, Holston Middle, Rocky Hill Elementary

Teamwork, ownership, personal responsibility, family, collaboration, understanding, caring, small tasks, individual attention, expectations, sharing, quality staff, mentoring, involved parents, relationships, communication – each of these terms come up repeatedly when Principals Donna Parker ([Gresham Middle](#)), Cory Smith ([Rocky Hill Elementary](#)), and Ashley Jessie ([Holston Middle](#)) talk about their students' success on the [2013 State Report Card](#).



Rocky Hill Elementary scored all As on both Achievement and Value-Added for the last four years. Gresham was one B score away from being all As this year after being all Bs just two years ago. Holston Middle has improved from Cs and Bs to years ago to all As and Bs this year. The Tennessee Department of Education issues the annual state report card and provides grades in achievement and value-added in math, reading science and social studies.

When asked who gets credit for the schools success, Ms. Parker at Gresham answers emphatically with EVERYONE!



“We understand what our children need everyone – including cafeteria ladies and custodians – help us talk to the kids,” she said. “Relationships are the underpinning of our program. We get to know our children and instill in them a ‘can-do’ attitude.”

Mr. Smith concurs. “Everybody feels like we are in it together. We’ve gone from ‘we’re a team’ to ‘we’re a family’,” he explains. A soon to be sergeant first class in the U. S. Army Reserve, Smith draws on much of his military experience to build success at the school.

“The first couple of years you build that team mentality and you work through getting to know people and their getting to know your strengths and weaknesses as an administrator. I think we’ve been together long enough as a core staff and parents as well that we’ve transitioned to that school family, school community mindset,” Smith explains. “Everybody is here for the same reason: we want the students to achieve the highest level of learning that they can. The students know that. They know we are here to encourage them, to push them and at the same time give them a pat on the back to make sure they know that they are still taken care of. After all, they are still little...5 – 6 up to 10 years old and they still need that guiding hand and to let them know we are here to take care of your emotional well-being as well as your academics.”

That caring attitude stands high at Gresham as well. “We are concerned for the social, emotional, and academic wellness of each student,” said Ms. Parker. “Teachers and staff start every school year training in the procedures until they become routines because we need to let the students know what it looks and sounds like when you are learning.” After each break in the school year, everyone re-establishes relationship and expectations.



Holston 8th grade honors ELA class students working on their laptop computers.

-photo by Holston Student Jake Woods

Holston is a School Technology Challenge school with technology that Ms. Jessie describes as a ‘great thing’ for their students. “It is providing ways for our students to tell us what they know. They are really motivated and engaged through the technology,” she said. This communication between and among students and staff as well as parents plays a key role in the success that Holston is experiencing. “We made our students more aware of what their data is and what they are learning. That has been a big turning point because students began taking ownership of their learning and understood how far they needed to go.”

The learning/teaching culture is changing at Holston. “Teachers use to say ‘great job’ but didn’t

explain why,” said Ms. Jessie. “Now they provide detailed feedback.” Students are also watching other student’s work and presentations and provide feedback.

That culture change began as a grand experiment at Gresham. Ms. Parker called it the *Curve of Possibility*. “We were going to ride it out,” she smiles. “We started three years ago and the first year...oh, my goodness, we thought. We’ve turned this thing on its ear. We knew we needed extra focus, we needed to talk to kids, but when you try something new, you never know how it will turn out.”



Holston Middle teacher Emily Jellicorse working with her ELA Honors Class.

-photo by Jake Woods, Holston Student

As it stands, it’s turning out pretty well. After incremental gains the first year, Gresham’s staff knew they were on to something, but needed more training for teachers. Teachers needed to sharpen their ‘lens’ so they could better see for themselves how they could help the kids. “We needed to talk to parents more about the standards-based teaching and learning because that was new,” said Ms. Parker. “It was no longer about a grade. We talked about what is a grade, what is contained in a grade that could be helpful to the student; how could we help the parent help their student. Through our conversations, we kept coming back to the grade meant ‘very little’ other than that child got a B or D. It didn’t say a lot about learning.”

To give meaning to grades, Gresham’s staff began to average repeated measures of content such as fractions, percent or decimal and then said to parents ‘this is what your child knows about fractions.’ It became a performance skill that measured proficiency against a standard. The students began to take ownership, knowing they were performing against a defined skill. Learning became individualized.

At Holston, the students are made aware of their data and what they are learning. They have taken responsibility for their own learning. Parents are getting

involved as well. Teachers are facilitators. The students are so involved in their learning and the use of technology that they have asked Ms. Jessie if they might get some round tables in part of the cafeteria so they could continue their learning much like an “Internet Café” atmosphere.

At Rocky Hill, Mr. Smith credits some of the success this year to the extension of core time to 45 minutes. Teachers make use of part of the additional time to rotate struggling students through small groups of 12-15 led by a teacher and a teaching assistant to work on specific skills. Gresham also provides extra teaching time by working with students on specific skills by taking advantage of extra time.

The concentration by all three schools on smaller, specific skills that build into greater success reflects the new standards-based learning. “Education is in a tough spot right now,” said Mr. Smith. “There are a lot of changes going on. I have always been of the mindset that we take it in small chunks and hold on to what works.”

Smith’s military background sums up his approach to change and assessments. “Somebody has determined at some point that this is what we need to have a student understanding at the of first grade, or second grade, etc., and now we are going to have an assessment to see if we taught this. I really see it as having a way of knowing that we have taught what we were supposed to and the kids have a base of knowledge to move on to the next level.”

Tennessee Students the Fastest Improving in the Nation

Gov. Haslam announces 2013 results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress



In November, Gov. Bill Haslam announced that Tennessee had the largest academic growth on the 2013 [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#) of any

state, making Tennessee the fastest improving state in the nation.

Commonly known as “the nation’s report card,” NAEP assesses students in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math. All 50 states have taken NAEP since 2003, and the results are regarded across the country as the best way to compare educational outcomes across states. Tennessee students’ combined growth on all four tests in 2013 exceeded the growth of all other states.

What does this mean?

Many times, parents and community members receive statistics as evidence of student success, and sometimes, they have difficulty connecting the two. What, then, do the NAEP results REALLY tell us? What can parents and students learn from this Department of Education announcement?



Jamie Woodson
President, CEO
SCORE

To dig more deeply into these results and learn how they reflect student progress, *Benchmarks* asked Jamie Woodson, President and CEO, [State Collaborative on Reforming Education \(SCORE\)](#), to explain.

“A few years ago, teachers, parents, business and community leaders, and policymakers acknowledged that our students were leaving high school too often unprepared for college and the workforce,” said Woodson. “We were doing a disservice to Tennessee students and their parents, and we resolved to take bold action in education that put students first. One change that very directly affects students and parents was to set higher expectations for all students first through the Tennessee Diploma Project and now through [Tennessee’s](#)



State Collaborative on Reforming Education

SCORE is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan advocacy and research institution founded by former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. Its work is governed by a theory of change that includes

- embracing high academic standards
- cultivating great school and district leaders
- ensuring excellent teaching in every classroom
- using data to enhance student learning

The institution collaboratively supports Tennessee’s work to prepare students for college and the workforce. It is governed by a 14-member board of directors comprised of Tennessee philanthropic and business leaders who are committed to ensuring that Tennessee’s students are prepared for the global marketplace. Additionally, SCORE’s work is advised by a 29-member steering committee comprised of the state’s top education stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, business leaders, parents and students.

[Common Core State Standards](#),” she said. “This change reflects the belief that, with the right help, all students can learn and learn at high levels.

“The NAEP results show us that our students and teachers rose to the challenge of those higher expectations and have made the largest gains in academic performance of any state.

“Improved academic performance means more students will be ready for success after high school when they go to college, to career or technical training, and to the workplace,” Woodson continued. “More students will enter post-secondary training ready to learn at higher levels without having to take remedial courses. They will finish their college and career training faster and at less cost.

“While we still have work to do, the NAEP results show us we are on the right track, and they inspire us to work even harder to help our students climb higher in academic performance,” she concluded.

For data on Tennessee’s NAEP results, visit:

http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013 or knoxschools.org.

Reminder Regarding Inclement Weather Procedures

Winter months can bring inclement weather. Before making the decision to delay or close school due to inclement weather, Superintendent Jim McIntyre relies on critical input from a variety of sources within the Knox County Schools and from outside agencies.

Either in the wee hours of the morning or throughout a risky weather day, McIntyre consults with the Knox County Schools' transportation, security, maintenance and curriculum and instruction departments, and various city and county government agencies, including law enforcement and engineering and public works, are also consulted. Additionally, the National Weather Service is contacted to obtain up-to-date information.

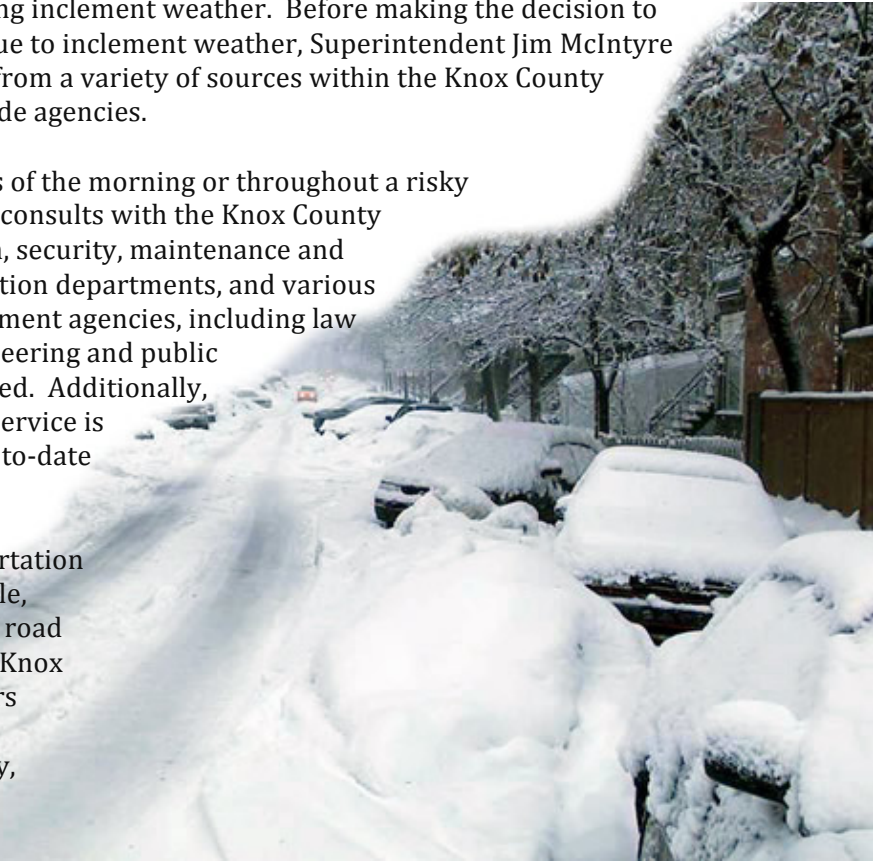
Input from the transportation department, for example, includes assessment of road conditions throughout Knox County. Bus contractors are situated in four quadrants of the county, and if inclement weather is moving in overnight, they begin

assessing road conditions throughout the night and into the morning. The representatives are knowledgeable about roadways that can be particularly susceptible to icing or slick conditions, and they are aware of the city and county's procedures for spreading salt/brine. Their assessments are relayed to the Knox County Schools' transportation department as part of information for consideration by McIntyre.

As the weather is being critically watched throughout the day and night, the Knox County Schools maintenance department already is taking action to ensure safety for those on school campuses. For severe winter weather incidents, more than 10,000 gallons of salt brine are mixed on site at one of the maintenance facilities and spread on the main driveways and sidewalks at every school. Additionally, custodians at each school begin spreading salt on walkways to help improve traction entering or exiting school buildings.

Did You Know? Salt Brine Production

The Knox County Schools is one of the only school systems in the region to make its own salt brine, which is less expensive than purchasing salt, gravel or sand and allows for faster response to and better treatment of snowy or icy conditions. For each winter weather incident, more than 10,000 gallons of salt brine are mixed on site and spread on the main driveways and sidewalks at every school in the Knox County Schools.



Maintenance employees also are hard at work to prepare for students, teachers and staff returning to school after a day missed due to inclement weather. They work to remove snow and ice from walkways, driveways and parking lots and if needed, re-spray the brine mixture to prevent re-freezing overnight. These proactive measures help provide safe dismissals from school and arrivals the next morning.

In the event the superintendent decides to delay, cancel or dismiss from school early, the Public Affairs office will begin immediately disseminates the information via

- automated phone messages to staff and parents
- a posting to the school system [website](#)
- messages to local news media
- notification via Twitter

If school is not in session or is dismissed early due to inclement weather, all scheduled activities in which students are involved will also generally be postponed or cancelled. Please contact your child's school or check the school's web page should you have any questions on extracurricular activities.

To receive the latest information on school delays and closures due to inclement weather, listen for information delivered to you by phone through the SchoolMessenger automated system; visit www.knoxschools.org, tune in to your local media outlets or follow us on Twitter via @knoxschools.

For more information, please consult the Knox County Schools [Emergency Closings Policy](#).

Common Core State Standards: Focus on English Language Arts and Literacy

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 of sorts that helps students be ready for college and career. After integrating the standards in some grades during 2012-2013, the Knox County Schools is fully implementing Common Core in all grades this year.



Benchmarks is dedicating the next few months to look 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 you can best support your student at home. In [November](#), we examined Common Core State Standards for mathematical practice. This month, let's look at how Common Core impacts student learning in English language arts and literacy.

English Language Arts and Literacy

In grades kindergarten through 12, learning and teaching English language arts and literacy are experiencing three major changes through Common Core. While students will continue to read and write, they will

- Read more factual information from science and social studies in addition to stories and literature
- Be asked to use evidence from text to answer questions
- Build a stronger vocabulary

Overall, Common Core State Standards bring to students the expectation to read more deeply and broadly, analyze and use text to support their opinions and write using details and complex vocabularies.

What does this mean day to day for your student?

Kindergarten

In kindergarten, students will

- Learn the alphabet and the sounds each letter makes
- Learn new words
- Read and understand simple stories
- Assimilate and share information through writing, drawing, listening and speaking
- Ask and answer questions about a story
- Retell stories with the help of the teacher
- Answer questions about details of a text with teacher's help

How you can help your kindergartener:

- Ask the teacher if your child is learning to read and write and inquire about his or her strengths and weaknesses.
- Read to your child and let him or her read aloud for about 15 minutes each day.
- Look for opportunities in everyday life to build your child's vocabulary.

Elementary Grades

Through Common Core State Standards, children transition from becoming independent readers and writers in first grade to reading widely and deeply in fifth grade. First graders are learning to use language appropriately, while third graders are

building ability to organize their writing, and fifth graders are producing numerous written pieces using correct grammar and punctuation. Fourth grade is key in building ability to understand and explain a book's explicit and implied meanings, as these students are learning to write summaries and book reports. Sixth graders are learning to determine the theme of a text and separate their opinions from the author's intention as they learn to organize ideas. As students progress through the elementary years, they will be asked to cite details from more challenging texts. This practice will help them become analytical thinkers.

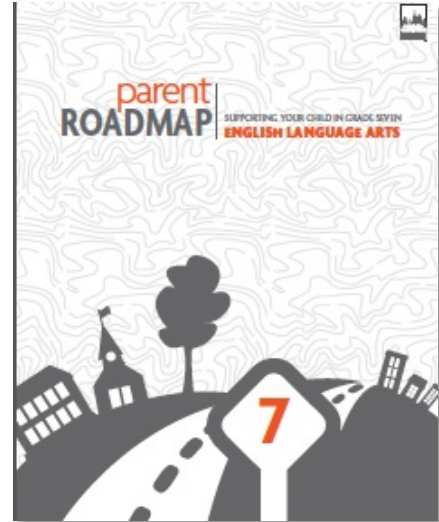
How you can help your elementary-grade student:

- Talk to your child's teacher about your student's ability to read grade-level stories for understanding and fluency. Ask about good study habits.
- At home, provide time and space for your student to read independently, away from distractions.
- Engage in conversations about what interests your child, and let him or her choose reading materials.

Middle and High School

Students in seventh and eighth grades are becoming able to deeply understand the central idea of a text and analyze its development. They compare and contrast use of text, video and multimedia to convey an idea and use precise language in writing to create cohesion and clarify relationships among ideas.

High schoolers are citing evidence from both literature and factual text to analyze explicit and inferred themes. They use developed and relevant facts and other conventions to write for specific audiences, they analyze points of view and how they are impacted by the author's choice of style. Students in high school might read literary texts such as *Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck and informational texts such as the "Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln.



Parent Roadmaps to CCSS

Here is a collection of documents to help with CCSS.

[Kindergarten](#)

[Third Grade](#)

[Seventh Grade](#)

[High School](#)

How you can help your older student:

- Ask your child's teacher if his or her work is meeting grade-level expectations and if he or she is becoming an effective writer.
- Talk at home about classwork, current events and their future aspirations.

Additionally, parents can support their students—no matter the age—by using technology to help build students' interest in reading, learning and vocabulary. The free online tutoring service, [TutorTN](#), available to all Knox County students can help. Also, you can continue to learn more about Common Core State Standards by talking with your child's teachers and visiting these resources:

www.knoxschools.org

[Key Points in Language Arts](#)

[Common Core Works](#)

Next month: Social Studies

New Online Tutoring Service - TutorTN

A new online tutoring service, TutorTN, is now available free of charge to students in the Knox County Schools. Students simply visit www.tutor.com/TutorTN and enter their seven-character active directory login or their Knox County Public Library card number to connect with expert tutors for one-to-one homework help or tutoring sessions in online classrooms. The TutorTN pilot project in Knox County is available from 3-10 p.m.,



seven days a week. Students can use computers, mobile phones and tablets to access the system.

Once students log onto the service, they select grade levels and subjects. Students can post questions or upload

problems to share with tutors who work with 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 email 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](#).

[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>.

Faulconer to Lead New CTE High School

The Knox County Schools offers nine [magnet schools](#), including a new Career Magnet Academy to open in August 2014 on the [Pellissippi State Community College Strawberry Plains](#) campus. John Derek Faulconer was recently named to lead the new high school.

“The opportunities at the career magnet school are unique,” Faulconer says. “Students will have the opportunity to explore four career-cluster options, including Homeland Security, Advanced Manufacturing, Teacher Preparation and Sustainable Living.” Upon completion of the four-year academy, he says, each student will have earned an industry certification and a high school diploma.

“After their senior year, students also have the unique option of enrolling as Pellissippi State Community College students. This is known as YEAR13 and is specifically designed for obtaining an associate’s degree and helping students become both college and career ready,” he said.



John Derek Faulconer
Principal
Career Magnet Academy



Career Magnet Academy will be on the Pellissippi State campus in Strawberry Plains

Faulconer joins the Knox County Schools after 11 years of experience as both a teacher and principal. Most recently, he served as lead principal of Corbin High School in the Corbin, Kentucky, Independent School System. There, he was instrumental in implementing technology across the school district and worked to ensure it was integrated into the curriculum. He promoted critical thinking in the classroom and worked to establish a supportive high school culture, resulting in markedly improved attendance.

In 2012, Faulconer was a guest speaker for the Southern Regional Education Board’s (SREB) Career and Technical Education Conference and was recognized by SREB for excellence. While he was principal, Corbin High School was named by U.S. News and World Report as one of the Top 10 High Schools in Kentucky and received recognition for college and career readiness percentages.

Faulconer has also served as principal, assistant principal and teacher at schools in the Anderson County, Tenn., School System. He earned a Master of Science degree in Educational Leadership from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tenn.

A goal-oriented leader, Faulconer is hard at work today with his first priority: Awareness.

“My immediate goal is to ensure that all Knox County Schools’ eighth-grade students are made fully aware of the vast opportunities that the CTE magnet high school at Pellissippi State can offer each of them. I have already visited numerous Knox County Schools middle schools and have begun to spread the word to students, teachers, parents and the community about how our unique program can benefit students and the community,” Faulconer said.

Still on his list to visit are the following middle schools:
Powell Middle, Jan. 14, 11 a.m.
Bearden Middle, Jan. 16, 8:30 a.m.
Cedar Bluff Middle, Jan. 24, 11:30 a.m.
West Valley Middle, Jan. 30, 6:30 p.m.

Other opportunities to meet Faulconer and get more information about the Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State are during open house events:

Tuesday, January 14
Monday, February 3
Monday, February 10

Each open house is scheduled for 6-8 p.m. at the Pellissippi State Community College Strawberry Plains campus (7201 Strawberry Plains Pike).

Faulconer is also excited to lead the process to officially name the new school. The public input process to name the Career Magnet Academy is set to begin early next year.

What are Magnet Schools?

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. The Knox County Schools magnet schools include these:

Elementary Schools

- Beaumont Magnet Academy (1211 Beaumont Avenue)
- Green Magnet STEAM Academy (800 Townview Drive)
- Sarah Moore Greene Technology Magnet Academy (3001 Brooks Avenue)
Middle School
- Vine Middle STEAM Magnet School (1807 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue)

High Schools

- Austin-East Performing Arts Magnet School (2800 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue)
- Fulton High School (2509 N. Broadway)
- L&N STEM Academy (401 Henley Street)
- West High School (3300 Sutherland Avenue)
- Coming August 2014: Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State Community College (a public input process to name the school will be conducted early next year).

For more information about magnet schools and to apply for transfer to any of the Knox County Schools magnet schools, visit choice.knoxschools.org, call 865-594-1731 or visit any of the magnet schools.

C-SPAN Winners: Learning Skills That Make them Poised, Mature



"Public Transportation in the Nation" with C-SPAN Bus – First Place

Left to right: Farragut Middle Students: Austin Hoag, Nalin Varma and Parin Bhaduri who along with their C-SPAN Class taught by Farragut Middle School Teacher Karen Rehder (r) won first place.

What began on a whim as a local contest entry now changes the lives of Farragut Middle School's Honors Language Arts students. Ms. Karen Rehder's 8th grade students have captured 13 awards in the last seven years in the national C-SPAN Video competition.

It all started in 2007 when she and her students entered the East Tennessee Television and Film Commission competition for middle and high school students – and won the middle school division. That spring, then-Assistant Principal Christine Oehler saw a flyer about C-SPAN video competition and the rest is history.

Ms. Rehder's students produced video "Public Transportation in the Nation" brought home the second First Place finish in the last three years.

The first year was an experiment but even then the novice entry won a third place prize. "That was the fuel that fed the flame," said Rehder. "This would be a great way to apply language arts skills and it would be more fun than working out of a book."

Always looking for a way to challenge her teaching skills and looking for new things, she sat down with the curriculum. "I discovered that everything could be addressed except for the literature skills. That was amazing to me – that I could cover the majority of my curriculum through this project and the kids not really realizing that they were learning something.

Not only were the students having fun, they developed a poise and maturity far beyond their age. "I love the fact that they start out as little green 8th graders in August, then as the process moves forward and they keep going through it, by the end of May they have poise and a maturity about them that they didn't have before. When I compare my C-SPAN kids to my other honors groups, they look the same on paper but my honors kids don't have the same kind of poise, the same kind of maturity – as the C-SPAN kids."

What makes the difference?

"It comes from interacting with people in the community – and not just people in the local community," explains Rehder. "One of my teams this year was able to interview Dr. Paul Robert, one of the founders of 'Reaganomics', via Skype. One of last year's teams spoke via Skype with a former ambassador to Israel." Each interview requires hours of research on the subject. "We don't want the interviewee to feel like it was a waste of their time," said Rehder.

Very little time is wasted, however, from beginning to submission dates. First each team must come up with a topic. "These are not easy topics like 'underwater basket weaving.' We're looking at terrorism, the economy – high-level thought is involved in understanding the concepts," said Rehder. "The material they are reading is from the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, the Washington Post. It's not your basic newspaper or your basic magazine." The text complexity demands the students use extensive reading skills to gather information. They then learn research skills, then have to whittle down and synthesize all the research. Writing the script then brings in grammar and composition skills.



"Inefficient Government Spending: The Foundation of Our Debt" – Third Place
Lauren Dickerson, Delaney Weller and Maggie Olson

Communication, obviously, plays a huge role in each project, not just in the finished product, but all throughout the process. Team members must learn to write well in e-mail communications, establish and maintain calendars, confirm appointments with follow-up letters and phone calls. "These are real world skills that they are learning at the age of thirteen," she observed.

Success – Despite Equipment

Ironically, the prize-winning editing is done not at school, but at home. "We don't have the technology in the classroom to do what they are doing," said Rehder. "They do their editing at home using whatever they have available.

"The technology piece is what gets really frustrating," she continued, "especially as you add in more layers. If all you are doing is combining standup interviews with content and you are not worried about B-roll, then that's fine. But as they start adding B-roll and sound, it gets more difficult." Currently, iMovie and Garage Band are about as sophisticated as the editing tools get.



"Education Across The Nation" – Third Place
Grace Shoffner, Maggie Murr and Julia Hammon



"A Game of Risk: Israel and Iran" – Third Place
Tali Graham, Eunice Baek and Lauren Fiet;

The media part of the curriculum brings in learning how to capture “B-roll” imagery (supplemental video footage) that supports the video message and is visually appealing. Even the literature portion of the curriculum is touched by the experience because the students must write a script with a beginning, middle, and end; must illustrate the conflict within the video and try to resolve it by the end.

Each year between 50-75 students apply for her C-SPAN class. Only 20-35 are selected. Often, the current students help recruit from the upcoming 7th grades. One student recounted that before the class experience, he could not write very well. “Now I can do it with my eyes closed,” he said.



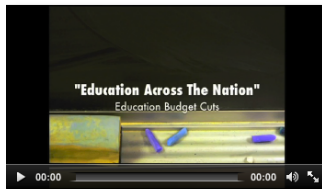
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Insufficient Government Spending: The Foundation of Our Debt
Lauren Dickerson, Delaney Weller and Maggie Olson



Education Across the Nation
Grace Shoffner, Maggie Murr and Julia Hammon

Click each picture to view the winning video entries

Schools Earn State, District Recognitions

Ten schools in the Knox County Schools recently earned awards on state and district levels in recognition of their achievement toward student success.

Reward Schools: The Tennessee Department of Education recently named its 2013 Reward Schools, which are the top 5% of schools for *performance* and the top 5% for *progress*. Schools are designated as Performance Reward Schools for overall student achievement, which is determined annually by a one-year success rate. This success rate is calculated by adding together the number of proficient or advanced students in each subject and dividing by the total number of test takers for each subject. Progress Reward Schools are designated for having high student growth as determined by a one-year Tennessee Value-Added Assessment Score school composite.

Five schools in the Knox County Schools earned distinction as 2013 Reward Schools:

Performance and Progress Reward School:
[Farragut High School](#)

Performance Reward Schools:
[L&N STEM Academy](#)
[Sequoyah Elementary School](#)

Progress Reward Schools:
[Carter High School](#)
[Powell Elementary School](#)



APEX AWARDS: APEX awards are given on a district level. In 2011, Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools, gathered input from teachers and principals, and collaborated with a team of community and school leaders to develop a strategic compensation program entitled [APEX \(Advance • Perform • EXcel\)](#), as part of the five-year strategic plan for the Knox County Schools. APEX is aligned with instructional goals and rewards work through collaboration, professional learning communities and teamwork. Monetary awards of \$5,000 and \$10,000 are awarded to the highest rated schools based on school-wide growth and/or the percent of students achieving expected growth in each subject area. Schools must also achieve Annual Measurable Objectives to receive the award. Awarded schools will use the monies to support educational-improvement efforts. The 2013 APEX

Award-winning schools include these:

APEX Exemplary Performance (\$10,000)
[Carter High School](#)
[Christenberry Elementary School](#)
[Farragut High School](#)

APEX Model Performance (\$5,000)
[Bearden High School](#)
[Hardin Valley Elementary School](#)
[Karns Middle School](#)
[South Knoxville Elementary School](#)

Students Delve Deeper Into Math Concepts, See Real World Applications Through “Vertical PLCs”

When Gary Petko became a math supervisor three years ago and began looking at student data, he saw there needed to be a single [math department](#) – not an elementary department, a middle school department and a high school department. “I wanted our math teachers to see first and foremost that they are math teachers,” he said. “We needed to get them talking to each other, to get them aware of what was going on at each level.”

The result is what Petko’s calls a “Vertical Professional Learning Community” or vertical PLC. He wanted high school teachers to visit middle school



Halls High math teacher Houston Qualls shares a point with Halls Middle teachers Dina Lane, Andy Skadberg and Cindy Yeary during their PLC meeting.

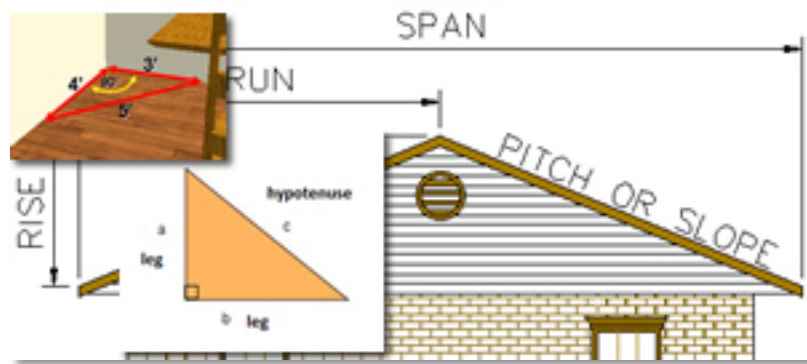
teachers and classrooms to see what was being taught and how. The ultimate goal is to have middle school teachers visit elementary schools, high schools to middle schools, and so on.

Teachers at [Halls High](#) and [Halls Middle](#) have been working together using Petko’s innovative vertical PLC. High school teachers visit with middle school teachers to see what is being taught and how, including vocabulary, tests, materials and more. Important among the Common Core standards is the need to focus on the coherence of the curriculum. To meet this need, the vertical PLC allows high school teachers to reintroduce topics rather than re-teach them. “If we re-teach each time, we stand a chance of not growing the students because we don’t have time to introduce new topics,” he explained.

Through the sharing of information between levels, high school teachers are able to go deeper into a skill by building on what the students had already learned in middle school. “If we take the student deeper into a topic, then we have a better chance of comprehension and understanding, and in the long term a better chance of retention of learning,” he said.

Math vocabulary is very important. One of the new math practices in Common Core talks about tending to precision, which is the communication of the vocabulary. Vertical PLCs have helped ensure consistent vocabulary is used among the teachers. “Sometimes when our students get to the next level a teacher introduces a topic that the kids have seen before but uses a different vocabulary. Kids get that ‘stone’ look in their face as if they don’t understand it when they are just hearing it a different

way,” explained Petko. “This vertical collaboration has allowed us to be aware of what vocabulary is being used at the previous grade level so that we can re-introduce with the same vocabulary.”



In the high schools, Petko is also working with the math classes

Teachers in different curriculum areas bring real-world applications to math concepts.

and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. “We do a disservice to our kids when they hear the word ‘slope’ in math class then go the CTE class and hear ‘pitch of a roof’ and think it is two different things. They are tiling a floor and the person uses the 3-4-5 method and they don’t realize that that’s the Pythagorean theorem.” At Halls in the algebra class when they are talking ‘slope’ they are also talking pitched roof. When they are in the construction class, they remind students that the pitched roof is a slope.

Principals for a Day Spend Time with Knox County Schools



Chief David Rausch, Knoxville Police Department, visited classrooms and interacted with students at Vine Middle Magnet School during Principal for a Day.

Nearly 80 business, civic and community leaders volunteered to spend part of their day in the Knox County Schools during Principal for a Day Nov. 21, an innovative program that opens the doors of the schools to encourage deeper partnerships between the Knox County Schools and the community. Guest “principals” shadow principals, observe classrooms and engage in school events to increase their awareness of the challenges and successes of public education.

The Principal for a Day initiative, outlined in the Knox County Schools Strategic Plan entitled *Excellence for All Children*, brings together a broad range of government, civic, non-profit, community and business leaders to participate in a half-day experience with school principals to experience the life of a school from inside the school walls.

Principal for a Day participants also can attend a luncheon/feedback session with Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools, to learn more about the school district’s successes and challenges and share their experiences from the day.

“The level of energy and commitment from the staff is fantastic, and the students are respectful and want to learn,” said Principal for a Day participant, Capt. Bob Wooldridge, Knoxville Police Department, who shadowed Principal Beth Blevins at South-Doyle Middle School.

Penny Owens with the city of Knoxville, John Fugate of Commercial Bank and Doug Hamburger with Walgreens shadowed Principal Becky Ashe at the L&N STEM Academy. “Students at the L&N are learning problem-solving techniques,” said Hamburger. “These students will be great future leaders.”



Guest “principals” Sheriff JJ Jones, Knoxville County Sheriff’s Office, and Kristina Howard, Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union, take a moment with Central High School student Mark Pozega during Principal for a Day.

Challenges facing the Knox County Schools also were discussed during the guest “principals” time in the schools and shared at the feedback luncheon. “Teachers are feeling overwhelmed,” said Grant Standefer with Compassion Coalition, who visited Maynard Elementary School with Principal Dr. Raphael Crawford. “The community needs to get involved to support and encourage teachers.”



Other challenges noted by the Principal for a Day participants included high student enrollment, demands on the principals, outdated facilities, equity of technology and more, but overwhelmingly, the guest “principals” voiced praise for the excellent education and care provided to students in the Knox County Schools. Teachers giving of their time before school, principal interaction with students, active learning and teacher and student engagement with a new level of rigor were noted as some of the successes.

Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett (above) served as Principal for a Day at Farragut Middle School and interacted with art students as they were creating self-portraits.

(Below) Three business leaders, Doug Hamburger, Walgreens; John Fugate, Commercial Bank; and Penny Owens, City of Knoxville, visited with Principal Becky Ashe (standing far right) at L&N STEM Academy during Principal for a Day.



Important Dates and Information

Transfer Window – Now through Feb. 18, 2014

The Knox County Schools now offers one transfer window for requests for transfers to magnet schools and for general transfers. The transfer window is open through 4 p.m. on Feb. 18, 2014. Transfer applications are available [online](#) and at the Transfers and Enrollment Office, 912 S. Gay Street. For more information about transfers, visit the Knox County Schools [website](#) and refer to the revised Knox County Schools [policy](#).

State End of Course Exams – Dec. 5-11

Open House Events: Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State

The Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State will host Open House Events where prospective students and parents can meet the principal, John Derek Faulconer, and visit the campus. Each Open House Events will be held at Pellissippi State Technical Community College Strawberry Plains Campus, 7201 Strawberry Plains Pike, Knoxville, TN 37914, and will be from 6 - 8 p.m. The Career Magnet Academy, schedule to open August 2014, will offer coursework in advanced manufacturing, sustainable living, homeland security, and teacher preparation. A public input process to name the school will be assembled early next year.

Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2014

Monday, Feb. 3, 2014

Monday, Feb. 10, 2014

High School Exams – Dec. 18-20

Half Day for Students, End of 9-Weeks Grading Period – Dec. 20

Winter Holidays – Dec. 23- Jan. 3

Knox County Schools will be closed for the Winter Holidays from December 23 – January 3. The Central Office and Maintenance will be closed December 24-26, and January 1.

Administrative Day, Student Holiday – Jan. 6

Board of Education Work Session – Jan. 6, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building 1st Floor Board Room

First day for Students after Holidays – Jan. 7

Board of Education Regular Session – Jan. 8, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building 1st Floor Board Room

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Jan. 20

Knox County Schools and the Central Office will be closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Third Opening Teacher Supply Depot – Jan. 25, 7 a.m. - noon

Teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators will have the opportunity to receive free classroom supplies at the KCS/PTA Teacher Supply Depot. The Teacher Supply Depot will

be open from 7 a.m. – noon at the former Cedar Bluff Intermediate School, 709 N. Cedar Bluff Rd. Please bring a school ID or another form of identification to be admitted.

Partners in Education Regional Conference – Jan. 30, 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Sarah Simpson Great Room

State of the Schools Address – Feb. 11, 6 p.m., Hardin Valley Academy (11345 Hardin Valley Road)