

Benchmarks

Noteworthy News for KCS Employees



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FY15 Budget Approved by Board of Education

On Monday, April 14 the Knox County Board of Education approved the school system's fiscal year 2015 general purpose budget, representing a total increase of 2.97% over the current year's budget. The general purpose budget, which must be approved by the Knox County Commission, totals \$432.335 million and includes a 2.5% base salary increase for teachers.

Described as "no frills," the budget is focused in three critical areas:

- 1) Enhancing teacher compensation
- 2) Opening the new Career Magnet Academy high school on the Strawberry Plains campus of Pellissippi State
- 3) Preserving school-based instructional positions

The budget, which closely aligns limited resources with the district's ambitious educational aspirations, will sustain important efforts in the classroom, including:

- continuous instructional improvement
- rigorous academic standards
- early literacy
- personalized learning supported by instructional technology
- professional growth through a developmental evaluation
- implementation of the TAP System at 18 schools
- teacher leadership
- educator collaboration
- high quality professional development and support

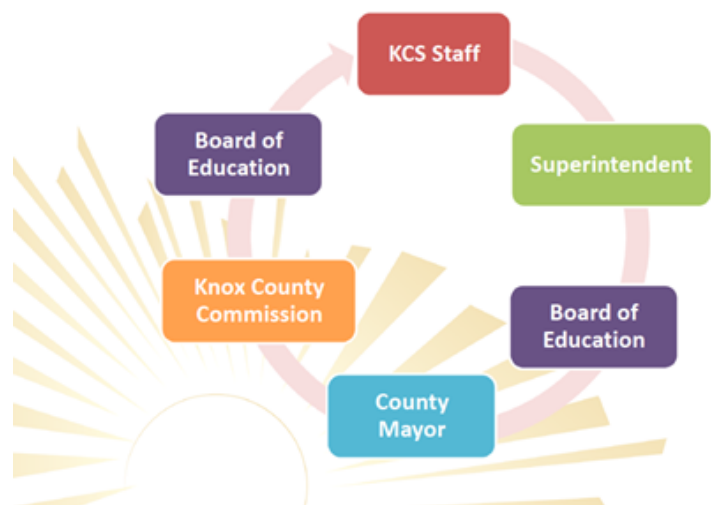
The FY15 budget will also allow the Knox County Schools to transition and integrate into the General Fund budget two valuable educational initiatives that have been incubated and financially supported by the Great Schools Partnership: pre-Kindergarten efforts and the summer bridge program, which successfully prepares struggling students for the academic transition from middle school to 9th grade.

The FY15 budget, along with the district's capital improvement plan and the school nutrition fund budget, must be approved by County Commission in early June. For more information or additional detail, please visit our website at knoxschools.org.



Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent, outlines the FY15 budget during a public input meeting recently held at Christenberry Elementary School.

Budget Process





Community members attend a strategic plan public forum at Halls Elementary School in October.

Strategic Plan Update:

Themes Emerge, Community-Input Meetings Set

In 2009, the Knox County Board of Education unanimously approved the Knox County Schools five-year strategic plan, which provides a detailed blueprint of ongoing instructional work. It also serves as a practical document that gives faculty and staff guidance in the myriad of important decisions they make every day to provide an effective education for all children.

As that initial five-year strategic plan comes to an end, the Knox County Schools is in the process of planning and creating the next iteration of its strategic plan.

For the past several months in a variety of ways, the Knox County Schools actively sought input from stakeholders and received enthusiastic response. There were 10 community forums attended by close to 800 people, visits with nearly 700 students, and numerous “chatterbox sessions” that provided an informal way for parents and community organization members to engage in the process. The school district received almost 1,200 online responses and 5,000 paper responses from a community survey, held several large and small teacher meetings and offered a teacher survey, to name a few.

From this input-gathering process, common themes are beginning to emerge, including

Focusing on Every Student

Maintain rigorous academic standards but seek ways to individualize instruction, enrichment and supports for each of the more than 56,000 children.

Investing in People

Help ensure teachers and staff feel valued, supported and are appropriately compensated for the enormously important work they do for children.

Partnering with Stakeholders

Enhance and strengthen efforts to open the lines of candid, collaborative communication with stakeholders.

Embracing a Culture of Excellence

Collective and collaborative engagement of stakeholders rooted in a shared vision for high expectations, outstanding instruction, continuous improvement, mutual accountability and a constant focus on student learning.

For more information on the creation of the next five-year strategic plan, please visit knoxschools2020.org.

Toward 2020: Upcoming Strategic Plan Town Hall

Upcoming public input sessions have been scheduled to give stakeholders an opportunity to see how the information gathered from the community over the past several months is reflected in planning for the next five-year strategic plan. The sessions will be hosted by Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools.

For the first time, the Knox County Schools will utilize technology to provide a “virtual” opportunity for the community to receive updates, ask questions and provide feedback on the strategic planning process. An “in person” town hall will also be hosted.

Virtual Town Hall:

Tuesday, April 29, 2014
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Participants may choose to hear the audio for this meeting through computer speakers or by dialing the following conference call information with your phone:

Toll-free Number: 213-416-1560 | Access Code: 483 0081
Attendee Meeting URL: <https://www.anymeeting.com/186-053-105>

Please note that the virtual session is limited to the first 200 people who register, and participants will be able to ask questions via the “chat” feature on the anymeeting.com system.

In Person Town Hall:

Thursday, May 8, 2014
6 – 7:30 p.m.
Sterchi Elementary (900 Oaklett Drive)
Streamed live on knoxschools.org or watch live on Comcast ch. 10 or ATT U-verse ch. 99

At the forums, community members will have an opportunity to see how the information gathered from the community over the past several months is reflected in planning for the next five years. The community will be able to ask questions, seek clarity and provide feedback on the future direction of the Knox County Schools.

Measures of Learning, Growth – Achievement, End Of Course Tests

Elementary and middle school students will soon take achievement tests (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program or TCAP) and high school students will take state prescribed end of course (EOC) tests. Under state law, students' scores on the TCAP shall count from 15 to 25 percent of the student's final report card grade during the spring semester in the subject areas of math, reading/language arts, science and social studies. In order to comply with state law, Knox County Schools policy now requires that a student's TCAP scores count as 15 percent of the student's second semester grade. This affects students in grades 3 through 8. In high school, the EOC is 25% of the final grade.



“The data from the TCAP and EOC assessments is used to help determine what supports or enrichment a student needs, as well as help to the district to determine what adjustments are needed to improve our instruction and intervention efforts,” said Nakia Towns, Chief Accountability Officer for the Knox County Schools.

“We believe that these assessments are just another opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning,” said Towns. “We hope that parents will make sure their students are ready for these assessments, as we hope they are ready for school any other day - well-rested with a good breakfast! Our teachers have helped students to prepare all year long through their daily instruction. These assessments are the culmination of all the effort teachers and students have put forth toward learning throughout the year.”

Test Dates:

April 28 – May 1: Achievement tests for grades 3-8 (all students)

May 5 – 8: Kindergarten – second grade assessment

May 1 – 7: End of Course tests

May 1: English 10 and U. S. History

May 2: English 11 and Algebra I

May 5: English 9 and Algebra II

May 6; Biology and Chemistry

May 7: Makeup day

Advanced Placement Tests are May 5 – 16

Students who missed taking EOCs during the school year can take them on July 7 at West High School (3300 Sutherland Avenue).

Summer Learning Opportunities:

HS Summer School, Elementary Summer Learning Academy and Middle School Boost Camp

The Knox County Schools has announced the dates for its summer school offerings. All summer programs will occur May 27 – July 3, 2014. State exams will be taken on July 7, 2014. All high schools may offer both virtual summer school and extended year summer school.

Additional details below:

- **Traditional Summer School (high school)** – Provides students with a second opportunity to master or improve upon subject matter attempted during the prior school year through direct instruction in the classroom. Traditional summer school can also be for those students who need to obtain a new credit with approval from the principal and counselor.

Location: West High School (3326 Sutherland Avenue)

Two sessions: Session 1- May27-June 13; Session 2- June 16- July 3.

Cost: \$120*

Student hours: 8:30 a.m. – Noon

Courses offered: Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Bridge Math, English IV and Drivers' Education

All classes will be theme-based and will incorporate project-based learning.

- **Virtual Summer School (high school)** – computer-based program that helps students earn (recover) credit for classes they previously did not pass.

Cost-\$10*

Location: At student's zoned school

Student hours: 8:30 a.m. – Noon

Courses offered: Courses available through Odyssey

- **Extended Year Summer School (high school)** – designed for students who need to raise a final grade to a 70% by completing needed coursework.

Cost- \$10*

Location: At student's zoned school

Student hours: 8:30 a.m. – Noon

Courses offered: Those courses for which student's final grade is 50 or above.

- **Summer Bridge Program (rising 9th graders)** – prepares struggling students for the academic transition from middle school to 9th grade.

Cost: No cost

Location: Austin-East Magnet High School, Bearden High School, Carter High School, Fulton High School, Halls High School, Karns High School, South-Doyle High School and Powell High School

Student hours: 8:30 a.m. – Noon

Courses offered: Language Arts, Math, and life/study skills

Please contact your child's principal at his/her zoned school for additional information or to have specific questions answered.

**Any student, regardless of financial status, may request a fee waiver – request forms are given to each student prior to the start of summer school.*

The Knox County Elementary Summer Learning Academy and Middle School Boost Camp will provide students with exciting learning experiences to increase achievement in reading and math. The explicit, systematic instruction is specifically designed to prevent the loss of skills often associated with summer break. Participation in this program will offer opportunities to practice and build the skills needed to close the achievement gap for struggling students. The goal of the program is to increase achievement and prevent summer loss of skills for low performing students.

The program begins Monday, June 2 and ends Friday, June 27, 2014. Selected students currently enrolled in grades K-5 are eligible. Parents received a referral letter in March if their student was selected. Parents will register students at the site of their choice on April 10, from 5 – 7 p.m. (This is a change from last year in that only rising students in K-4 were included. This year students in 5th or rising into 6th will be a part of the Middle School Boost Camp initiative.)

School sites: Cedar Bluff Elementary**, Christenberry, Dogwood Elementary**, Green Magnet Academy, Halls Elementary, Lonsdale Elementary, Norwood Elementary, Ritta Elementary**, Sarah Moore Greene Magnet Academy**.

*** Indicates schools that will host Middle School Boost Camps.*



Knox County Schools Accepted into Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools

KCS selected to join national network of school districts committed to demonstrating, evaluating and scaling innovation

Digital Promise, a national, independent nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to accelerate innovation in education, named the Knox County Schools as one of nine new members accepted into the [League of Innovative Schools](#).

The League of Innovative Schools is a national coalition of school districts and educational agencies that is both a professional learning network and an incubator for innovative educational practices. The League brings together educators, researchers and entrepreneurs to demonstrate, evaluate and replicate promising ideas, with the goal of improving student achievement.

“We are thrilled to be selected to engage in this unique collaborative learning opportunity,” said Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools. “The League will help us to learn from other innovative school districts, as well as better leverage the tremendous talents of our teachers and classroom technology to better prepare our students for success in our increasingly digital world.”

The Knox County Schools was selected from a competitive and national pool of applicants, based on its leadership, evidence of results, innovative vision for learning powered by technology, and commitment to collaborating with other League members. Upon joining the League, members will share lessons learned, participate in national and regional forums, and partner with research institutions, technology developers, and one another to deliver better results for students.

“The idea behind the League is simple but ambitious: Innovative superintendents can support each other in transforming the learning environment and improving engagement and achievement,” said Karen Cator, President and Chief Executive Officer of Digital Promise. “By adding these nine new members and the sum of their experiences, the League can become an even stronger catalyst for improving opportunity for students around the country.”

The nine members of the League of Innovative Schools spring 2014 cohort are:

- Department of Defense Education Activity Kaiserslautern District — Baumholder, Germany
- Highline Public Schools — Burien, WA
- Knox County Schools — Knoxville, TN
- Lexington County School District One — Lexington, SC
- Mentor Public Schools — Mentor, OH
- Pascack Valley Regional High School District — Montvale, NJ
- Richland School District Two — Columbia, SC
- Rowan-Salisbury Schools — Salisbury, NC
- South Fayette Township School District — McDonald, PA

With these additions, the League now includes 46 school districts and education agencies in 25 states, representing nearly 3 million students.

High School Graduations Announced

L&N STEM Academy celebrates first graduation class

Next month, high school seniors in the Knox County Schools will step onto the stage and into their futures as they graduate. While this is a momentous occasion for all graduates, one group perhaps feels the importance a bit more.

On August 11, 2011, the first freshman class walked through the doors of a new and unique high school in Knox County: [L&N STEM Academy](#). Now, four years later, this group of pioneers will graduate as the first class in the school's history.

Located in Knoxville's historic L&N Station, the academy works toward a mission "To impart, to empower, to inspire." School leaders, teachers and staff believe they are developing the most precious resource for 21st Century jobs and creating an infrastructure for enlarging the capacity nationwide for STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education. What drives them is their desire to be an agent of transformational change in STEM education where all students achieve at their highest levels.



Next month, 16 seniors will be the first to graduate from L&N STEM Academy. This tight-knit group, shown here after a Faculty vs. Students flag football game, will graduate on May 13.

Those are big expectations for the graduating class of 2014 and all those who follow. What do some of these Gryphons, who are the first to graduate from the L&N Academy, say about their leading the way for others at the school...about their futures...about their education at the innovative school?

What two Gryphon seniors have to say...

[My years at L&N have] been full of countless opportunities for me to put myself out into the real world and experience something that only a hand full of high school teens can say that they have experienced....We have some of the most gifted art students I have seen.... We have amazing athletes.... So, if you must take one thing, it must be that STEM does not only include technology at the forefront of education but also amazingly well rounded individuals who are special in their own right.

-Grant Baumann

As the first generation of L&N graduates, we all left something—schools, friends, our communities—to come to STEM. That loss is inconsequential when compared to what we have gained: Real-world skills, professional experience and a community of like-minded peers. As a 2014 STEM graduate, I would like to say thank you to every teacher, administrator, support staff and parent who made my school possible.

-Sarah Smith

Commencement for the L&N STEM Academy is set for May 13, 2014, 6 p.m., at Thompson-Boling Arena on the University of Tennessee campus. On May 14, 2014, a group of creative thinkers and problem

solvers from the L&N Academy will enter the world well prepared to face their futures. (See below for a list of graduation ceremonies for all high schools in the Knox County Schools.)

As a magnet school, L&N STEM Academy accepts transfers from Knox County Schools middle and high schools. For information about requesting a transfer, visit transfers.knoxschools.org.

**KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS HIGH SCHOOLS
2013-2014 COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES**

<u>School</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
L&N Stem Academy	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/13/14	6 p.m.
KAEC	KAEC	05/14/14	10:30 a.m.
Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/14/14	3 p.m.
Austin-East High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/14/14	5:30 p.m.
Fulton High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/14/14	8 p.m.
Halls High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/15/14	3 p.m.
Carter High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/15/14	5:30 p.m.
Central High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/15/14	8 p.m.
South-Doyle High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/16/14	3 p.m.
Gibbs High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/16/14	5:30 p.m.
Bearden High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/16/14	8 p.m.
Powell High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/17/14	9 a.m.
Karns High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/17/14	11:30 a.m.
West High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/17/14	2 pm.
Hardin Valley Academy	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/17/14	4:30 p.m.
Farragut High	Thompson-Boling Arena	05/17/14	7:30 p.m.
District-wide summer graduation* *For students who graduate during the summer months	Central High School	08/07/14	7 p.m.

Please note that all commencement ceremonies taking place at Thompson-Boling Arena will be streamed live at knoxgrads.com and available for purchase.

Northwest Middle School Commended for AVID Implementation

Northwest Middle School recently was commended for achieving a school-wide college-readiness culture through the AVID program.

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is an international college-readiness system that works to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college and success in a global society. A total of eight middle and high schools in the Knox County Schools offer the AVID elective class, which is designed to reach students in the academic middle, and as demonstrated at Northwest Middle School, the AVID strategies can be integrated into all classes to develop a culture of college readiness for all students.



The AVID Center recently recognized Northwest as one of only 10% of the almost 5,000 AVID school sites achieving a student population of at least 10% in the AVID elective and implementing the AVID strategies in all classes. Northwest Middle School is the only school in the Knox County Schools to have reached this level.

“It’s through the leadership and visioning of the AVID team at Northwest and the support of the school’s administration that this school-wide implementation of AVID is even possible,” said Heather Mounce, Knox County Schools AVID District Coordinator.

“Teachers now have a toolbox provided by their training in AVID strategies, which align with Common Core, to help students be independent thinkers and problem solvers,” said Michelle Staal, AVID Coordinator for Northwest Middle School. “Our teachers are phenomenal at taking a strategy that works for them and modifying and differentiating it for each level of learner.”

AVID helps students be ready for college through focusing instruction on writing, inquiry, collaboration and reading. Like Common Core, it emphasizes strategic thinking, analyzing and problem solving.

Important Dates and Information

April 18 –Holiday – Good Friday

Knox County Schools, Central Office, and Maintenance will be closed.

April 21 –Holiday

Knox County Schools, Central Office, and Maintenance will be closed.

April 23 – End 4 ½ Weeks Grading Period

Knox County Elementary Honors Choir Concert – April 27, 3:00pm, South-Doyle Middle School

Achievement Testing Window, End of Course Exams – see Benchmarks article for details

May 5 – Knox County Board of Education work session, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building

May 5-8 – Kindergarten-second grade assessment

May 5-16 – Advanced placement tests

May 7 – Knox County Board of Education regular meeting, 5 p.m., City County Building

May 13-17 2014 – High School Commencement Ceremonies – see Benchmarks article for details

May 19 – Knox County Board of Education mid-month work session, 5 p.m., Andrew Johnson Building

May 19 – 21 – High school underclassmen exam window

May 21 – End of fourth 9-weeks grading period; end of second semester

May 21 – Last day for students (half day)