



**A RESOLUTION OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF
KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE,
AFFIRMING ITS INTENTION
TO PARTICIPATE IN
SECTION FOUR (4) OF THE
EDUCATION FREEDOM ACT
OF 2025 RELATIVE TO
BONUSES FOR EDUCATORS**

RESOLUTION NO. 25-003

**APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
CORRECTNESS:**



DIRECTOR OF LAW

Date: April 10, 2025

WHEREAS, the Knox County Board of Education is elected by the people of Knox County to govern the Knox County Schools; and T.C.A. § 49-2-203 authorizes local boards of education to govern their respective districts; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly passed the “Education Freedom Act of 2025” during the first Extraordinary Session of the 114th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, this Act includes a provision of one-time bonuses funded by the State of Tennessee of no less than \$2,000 to existing public school educators in the state; and

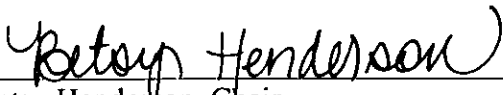
WHEREAS, Section Four (4) of the “Education Freedom Act of 2025” requires that a local board of education for an LEA seeking to participate in Section Four (4) of the proposed act must affirm its intention to participate via a resolution in order to receive state funds to issue these bonuses; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the statute, Knox County Schools shall use the definition of “existing educator” as it appears in T.C.A. § 49-3-104 and guidance provided by the Tennessee Department of Education (attached); and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AS FOLLOWS:

That the Knox County Board of Education affirms its intention to participate in Section Four (4) of the “Education Freedom Act of 2025,” relative to bonuses for existing educators, as defined by the statute.

Confirmed as an action of the Board:



Betsy Henderson, Chair
Knox County Board of Education

Date: April 10, 2025

2024-25 One-Time Teacher Bonus Information

Overview & Key Points

During the 2025 Special Legislative session, the General Assembly passed Chapter 7 of the Public Acts of the 1st Ex. Sess., which appropriated funds to provide one-time bonuses of \$2,000 to each teacher employed in a K-12 school in the 2024-25 school year.

- The definition of “teacher” is tied to the same definition of “existing educator” used in TISA.
- Local school boards are required to pass and submit to the department a resolution agreeing to participation in the bonus program no later than June 1, 2025.
- Bonus payments are projected to be sent to districts in July, pending funds being loaded to the department to issue them.

Amount

- Eligible educators will receive a bonus of \$2,000.
- For each bonus, districts will receive a total payment of \$2,306.60 to cover the employer share of benefits (social security, Medicare, and TCRS). These funds above the bonus amount ensure the district is not responsible for the employer share of benefits for a state-supported bonus payment. (This operates in the same manner as the Career Ladder program.)
- Employee share of benefits would be covered by the employee like any other payroll payment made to them.

Timing

The bonus funds were appropriated in FY2026, meaning the department will not have the funds to distribute prior to July 1, 2025. We are working with our partners at Finance & Administration to ensure funds are loaded for disbursement as early in July as possible.

Eligible Educators

The statute directs bonuses to be paid to all existing educators employed in K-12 schools in the 2024-25 school year who meet the state definition of “existing educator” as used in Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-3-104.

- Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-3-104: *Existing educator* means an individual who is evaluated pursuant to 49-1-302(d)(2) and who provides direct services to students at school sites.
 - State Board of Education Rule 0520-02-01-.01(b): “Teacher” means licensed, instructional staff who are responsible for providing direct instruction to students for the majority of the instructional day.
- Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-302(d)(2): Evaluation reference includes an exclusion of “teachers who are employed under contracts of durations of one hundred twenty (120) days per school year or less or who are not employed full-time.”

Eligibility Determinations

The department will use the state system of record, TNCompass, and pull all educators who are:

- 1) licensed,

2) staffed to a school site(s), and

3) for whom “teacher” is selected as the broad evaluation category.

Please note that “teacher” in TNCompass includes a wide variety of roles with direct supports to students, including Pre-K teachers, interventionists, school counselors, library/media specialists and other roles. Categories excluded from this list are instructional supervisors and administrators.

Aligned to the statutes and rules detailed above, to be eligible for the bonus, an educator must also:

- Spend a majority of their day in direct services to students;
- Be employed more than 120 days; and
- Be in full-time employment status

Verifying Educator Rosters

1. Base List: The department will pull the base list of educators from TNCompass on April 15, May 15, and June 15. The base list reflects educators who are licensed, staffed, and assigned the “teacher” category. These data pulls will be loaded into TNShare and districts will be notified of their availability.
2. District Verifications: Districts will be responsible for ensuring a) the base list is correct in TNCompass, and b) whether educators on the list do or do not meet the additional eligibility requirements of spending a majority of the day in direct services to students and full-time employment of more than 120 days.
 - The first two pulls are preliminary and will allow districts time to ensure their rosters and configurations in TNCompass are correctly capturing all eligible educators. Further, these early data pulls will permit districts to begin assessing their rosters to flag educators as meeting or not meeting the criteria noted above.
 - The **final data pull to be used in calculating total bonuses will be on June 15**, and districts will then review final rosters, confirming whether each educator on the list did or did not meet the criteria above. Districts will return the finalized rosters to the department for processing. Once complete, the department will calculate the total payment amount and load funds into ePlan as soon as the funds are available.

More information on the verification steps will be released with the first data pull in April. Please note that districts remain responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable laws and State Board of Education rules to appropriately classify employees for evaluation purposes.

Requirements

In order to receive the bonus funds, each local board of education must pass a resolution signaling their intent to participate in Section 4 of the Education Freedom Act (the educator bonuses). Once a local board has the passed resolution, the district will upload the file into ePlan. More information on where to upload the resolutions will be released soon.

Please note that no payments can be made to districts if the resolution is not received by the statutory deadline of **June 1, 2025**.