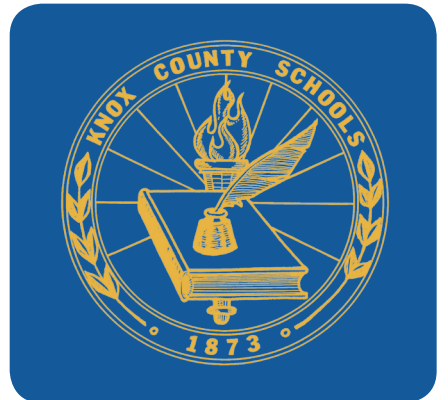
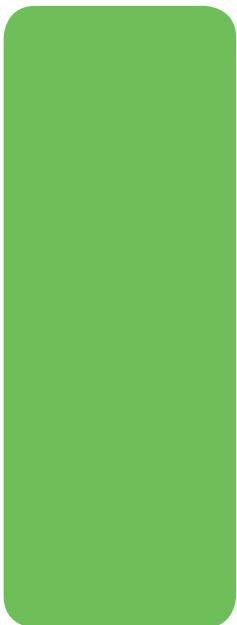




# Knox County Schools 2015-2016 Progress Report

Deepening Our Work:  
*Excellence for Every Child*





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As part of the 2015 State of the Schools Address, the Knox County Schools committed to facilitating seven broad stakeholder conversations to address some of the school system's most pressing issues.

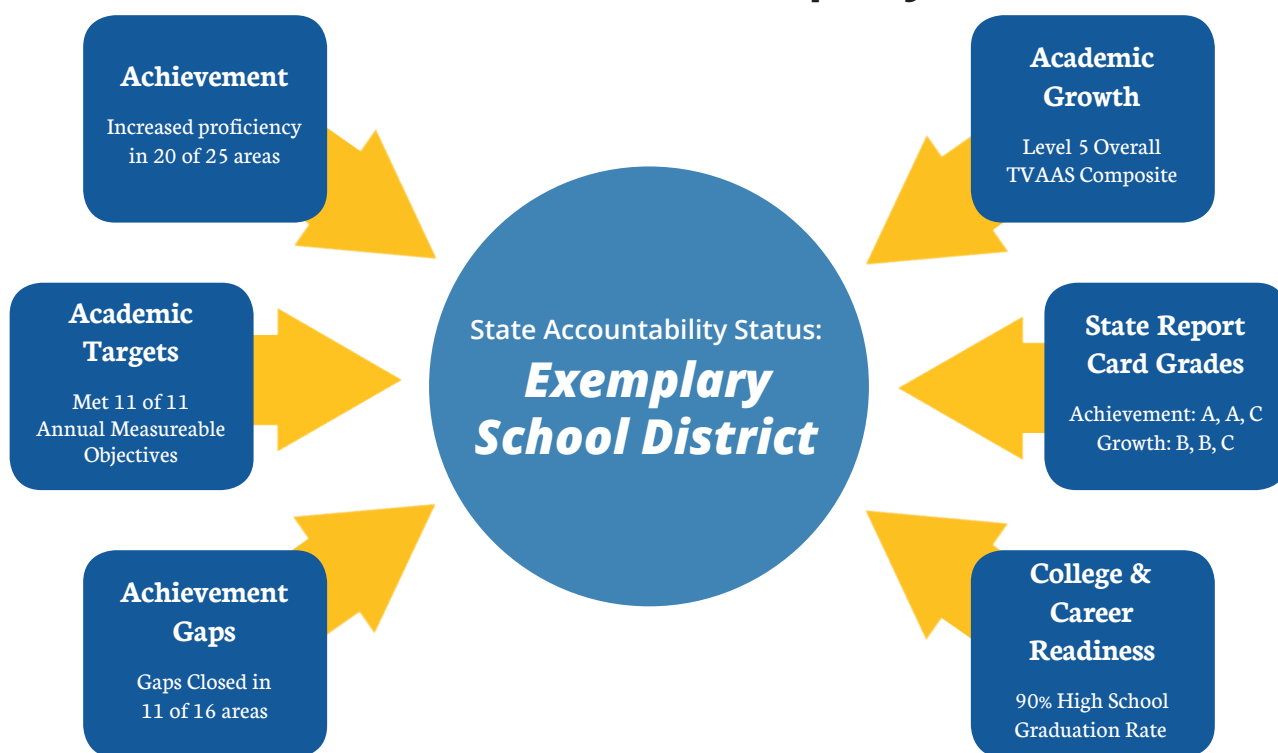
- Task Force on Disparities in Educational Outcomes -
- More Personalized Professional Development Resources -
- Restructure Our Differentiated Pay Plan -
- Explore a Balanced Calendar -
- Develop a Budget that Reflects Our Ambitious Goals -
- Continue Utilizing our Teacher Advisory Committee -
- Implement a Comprehensive Student Assessment Inventory -

In the Knox County Schools we are proud of the progress being made to ensure success for every student in the school system. In order to achieve our very ambitious goals, we must continue to prioritize creating and building a culture of excellence - where every school is a great school, every student is supported and successful, every staff member is a steward of excellence, and every stakeholder is productively engaged.

Since the inception of our inaugural strategic plan in 2009, the Knox County Schools continues to build on the very important instructional and support work necessary to ensure all children receive an excellent education. Now in our new strategic plan, adopted by the Board of Education in 2014, the focus continues in implementing our blueprint that helps guide the important decisions we make every day to provide an effective education for all children.

This report provides a sampling of the district's many successes during the past years and provides a preview of the work ahead during the 2014-2019 strategic plan.

## How Did We Achieve Exemplary Status?



## Other State Accountability Highlights

- KCS earned a Composite Level 5 (highest level attainable) for growth in all categories: Overall, Literacy, Numeracy, and combined Literacy & Numeracy
- 22 schools received straight As in Achievement
- The number of Tennessee Reward Schools increased to six: Carter High School, Carter Middle School, Copper Ridge Elementary School, Gap Creek Elementary School, Farragut High School, and Sequoyah Elementary School
- Our Priority and Focus Schools are improving!
  - All four Priority schools showed better than expected growth, making them ineligible for takeover by the state's Achievement School District
  - Lonsdale Elementary elevated its accountability status to Priority Improving
  - Hardin Valley Elementary closed its economically disadvantaged achievement gap sufficiently to be removed from the Focus School list entirely
  - Fountain City Elementary and South-Doyle High School progressed to Focus Improving

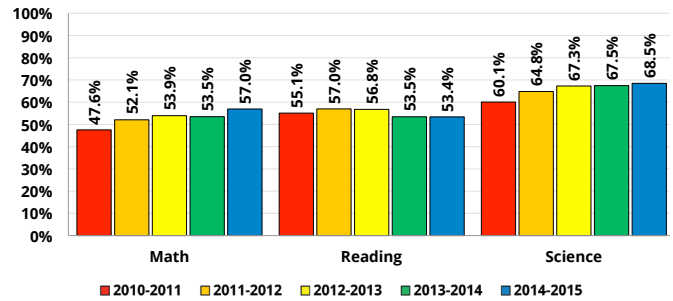
# Summary of 2014-2015 Academic Results

The Knox County Schools improved student proficiency in 20 out of 25 grade/subject areas over the previous year. The 5-year trend graphs show sustained, positive movement across most subjects and grade levels, particularly in math and science.

The Knox County Schools' **90% Four Year High School Graduation Rate** (up from 88.7% last year and 79.3% in 2008) is a tremendous achievement and is a direct result of all the hard work done by students, teachers, counselors, and administrators.

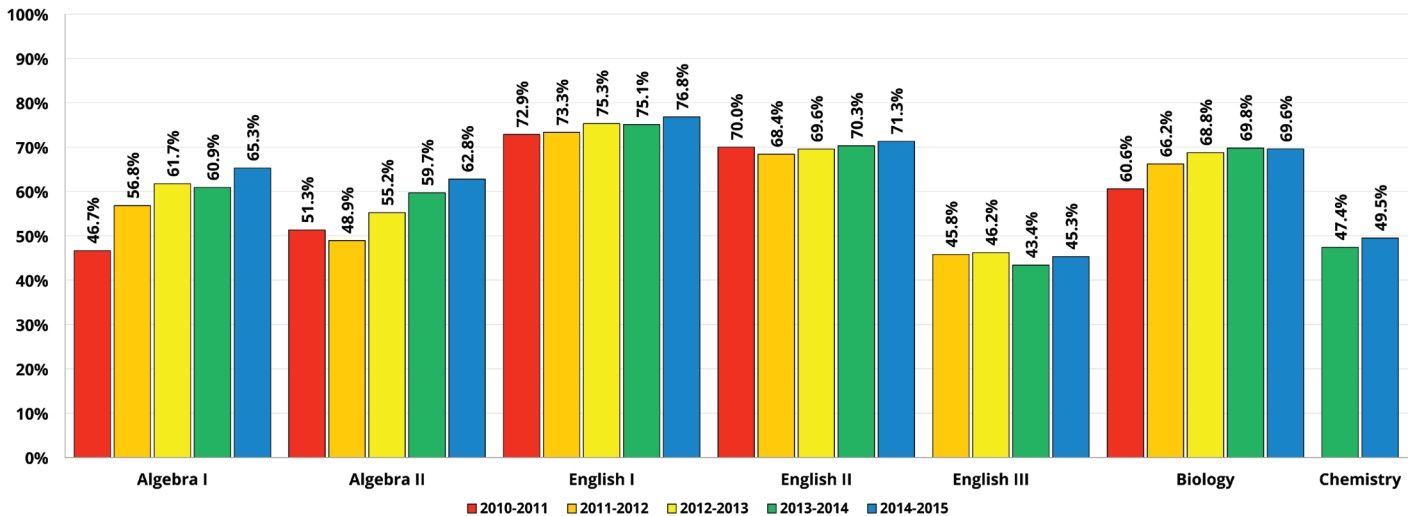
## Grades 3-8 Performance

Percentage of Students Proficient and Advanced by Subject

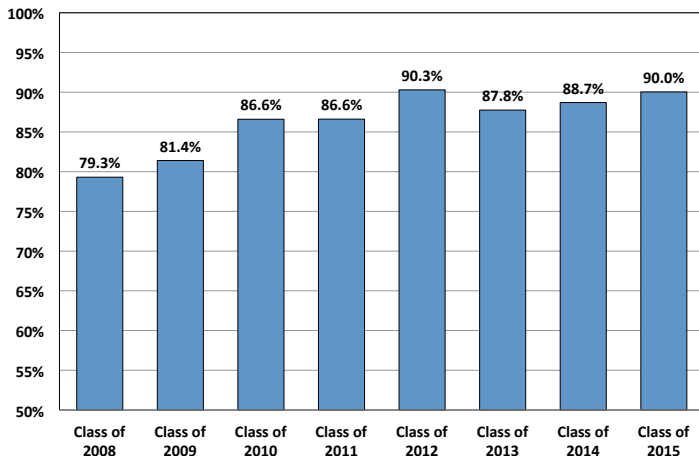


## High School Performance

Percentage of Students Proficient and Advanced by Subject



## High School Graduation Rate



## College & Career Readiness Results

- ACT Composite scores improved 0.3 points, while Tennessee and the nation remained flat.
- Of 1,600 KCS graduating seniors, 43%, earned at least one college credit via dual enrollment or Advanced Placement classes.
- KCS achieved all time highs in the number of students taking AP exams (2,956), the number of AP exams scored (4,817), and the number of exams where students scored a 3 or better (2,614).
- In the 2014-15 school year, 354 KCS students earned CTE certification in construction, and 45 students earned certification as a certified nursing assistant.
- Immediate College Enrollment is stable at approximately 65%.

# 2014-2019 Strategic Plan - *Excellence for Every Child*

**Our Vision:** The Knox County Schools will be a system where all students achieve at high levels and every school is a school of distinction. Children will begin their education at an early age. High quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, and high standards will permeate the educational landscape from early education to graduation. Innovation and creativity will be the hallmarks of the school district in teaching, management, and student learning. In short, the Knox County Schools envision a future where every child will achieve academic excellence.

## Our Strategy



### Goal 1 Focus on Every Student

- Objective 1: Guarantee Excellence in the Classroom
- Objective 2: Personalize Learning
- Objective 3: Facilitate High Quality Student Supports



### Goal 2 Invest in Our People

- Objective 1: Build & Support Our Community of Learners
- Objective 2: Build & Support Our Community of Leaders
- Objective 3: Value Our Hardworking People



### Goal 3 Partner with Our Stakeholders

- Objective 1: Build & Strengthen Our "One Big Team"
- Objective 2: Invite & Earn Stakeholder Feedback
- Objective 3: Improve Customer Service & Communication



**Our Vision:  
Excellence  
for Every  
Child**

## Our Future

**Culture  
of  
Excellence**

## Commitments to Our Community

As Knox County Schools, we always:

Do what is **best for students**;

Ensure that our **high expectations for student learning drive all of our work** and decisions;

Act as a **community of learners** who are supported and empowered to professionally grow and innovate;

Act as a **community of leaders** where each one of us purposefully models excellence, courage, service, and humility; and

Build **trusting relationships with all of our stakeholders** by speaking honestly and respectfully because collectively, we achieve more for students.

# Goal 1: Focus on Every Student

## Objective 1: Guarantee Excellence in the Classroom

### Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force

In recognition of the differences in academic and disciplinary outcomes among subgroups of students within the Knox County Schools, the Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force was created during the 2014-15 school year with the purpose of examining the issues and developing a set of recommendations to address them. Task force members represent a wide variety of school and community stakeholders, including leaders from law enforcement, faith-based organizations, non-profit partners, school principals, teachers, parents, and students. With input from the community at large, the task force is expected to propose a set of recommended action items later this spring.



### Student Assessment Inventory and Transitioning to TNReady

KCS conducted a comprehensive inventory of the assessments administered across the district and collected broad-based stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of testing. The insights generated through this process indicated that the transition to new TNReady exams could be used as an opportunity to reset the test culture in the district. Efforts were made to increase communication to families regarding these new state tests, which are fully aligned with the rigorous Tennessee State Standards.



### Operational and Administrative Excellence

The Knox County Schools strives to ensure that all aspects of instructional work are supported and reinforced by administrative and operational efforts. Here are some of the ways KCS is working to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of these functions:

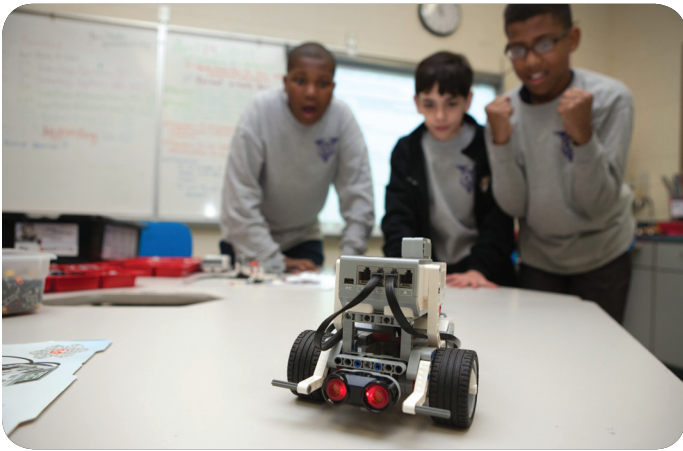
- Replaced an outdated student information system with the new Aspen system in 2014-2015
- Implementing a comprehensive financial management plan
- Conducting annual Return-On-Investment analyses to ensure each program is producing its intended results
- Establishing metrics, called key performance indicators, for most operational functions
- Executing an independent assessment of transportation department operations, organization, policies and practices
- Implementing an upgraded human resources and payroll management system

# Goal 1: Focus on Every Student

## Objective 1: Guarantee Excellence in the Classroom

### Cultivating the "Whole Child" Through Diverse Learning Opportunities

Along with strong foundational math and reading skills, we must work to ensure students are well-rounded, happy, life-long learners.



From dance, choral, and band recitals, to celebrating the arts and outdoor festivals, teachers develop creative lessons and student activities to keep students engaged and excited to learn.

KCS students are applying their skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in fun and exciting ways, whether it's robotics activities at Vine Magnet, or students at Gresham Middle School witnessing their science experiment launch in a NASA rocket to the International Space Station.



Over 30% of high school students learn teamwork and leadership through participation in athletics.



# Goal 1: Focus on Every Student

## Objective 2: Personalized Learning

### Providing Multiple Pathways to Success

We recognize that all students may not find success in the same way or in the same learning environment, so we are committed to providing a variety of options for students. Here are just a few highlights to illustrate KCS's work to provide multiple pathways for students.

### Magnet Pathways



KCS initiated a new International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme at Bearden Middle School and West High School in the 2015-16 school year. This internationally recognized rigorous academic program will help prepare our students for a bright and successful future.



In Partnership with higher education and industry leaders, KCS launched its ninth magnet program in Fall 2014: the Career Magnet Academy on the campus of Pellissippi State Community College. Students enter one of four career paths: Advanced Manufacturing, Homeland Security, Sustainable Living, or Teacher Preparation.

### Certifications

*"The Nursing Education class allowed me to go through the daily responsibilities of a Certified Nursing Assistant. I also saw how the health care providers worked together to provide their patients with the best care possible. This class opened my eyes to what a job in the medical field is like. This was a fantastic experience, and I will always be grateful for the opportunity. I hope to use everything I have learned through the Nursing Class to further my education at the University of Tennessee and earn my Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree."*

Hannah Kidd, Powell High Student

### Career & Technical Education



Emerald Academy, the first charter school authorized by Knox County Schools, opened its doors in Fall 2015.



Ride and Decide, a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) program in 2015, enabled KCS students to get paid summer internships in skilled trades.

### Distance Learning



Eleven schools are benefiting from UT Battelle's investment in distance learning, making it possible for students to participate in academic classes they wouldn't otherwise be able to take.



# Goal 1: Focus on Every Student

## Objective 2: Personalized Learning

### Balanced Calendar

One of the strategic plan promises was to explore the feasibility of transitioning from a traditional school calendar to a “Balanced Calendar,” which can provide students more immediate intervention and enrichment opportunities. After thorough input from the community during school-based meetings, surveys, and discussions with daycare providers, a recommendation was made not to pursue the balanced calendar due in part to the anticipated costs. However, due to the amount of support, a week-long Fall Break was adopted for the 2016-17 school calendar.



### Technology-Enabled Personalized Learning

Personalized learning, a strategy that focuses on meeting the distinct learning needs of individuals and encourages students to take ownership for their learning, is a priority for all schools in the district. Having 1:1 technology in the classroom can further enable this strategy. Building upon the initial pilot at L&N STEM Academy and the 11 schools that received 1:1 technology through the School Technology Challenge, eight additional schools have become PLE (Personalized Learning Environment) schools. Two of these additions, Bearden Middle School and Carter Middle School, were added in Fall of 2015 through a Digital Promise Verizon Innovative Learning Schools grant. Participating schools share successes with one another through a PLE advisory network. Additionally, a special event was held during the 2014-2015 school year to showcase tech-enabled personalized learning for community members.



### Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI<sup>2</sup>)

Tennessee State Standards set high expectations for every student. In an effort to support all children in meeting these expectations, KCS has implemented the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI<sup>2</sup>) framework. RTI<sup>2</sup> is a differentiated system of instruction and interventions tailored to students needs. Components of RTI<sup>2</sup> include: high quality on-grade level curriculum and instruction for all students, system-wide screenings that are used to determine whether students demonstrate the skills necessary to achieve grade level standards, interventions provided in students’ areas of deficit, and monitoring of student progress and fidelity of programs to ensure student achievement. KCS began RTI<sup>2</sup> implementation in elementary schools in 2014-15, and middle schools in 2015-16. High school implementation will begin in 2016-17. So far the results have been positive: approximately 25% of students have already been able to graduate to a less intensive tier.

# Goal 1: Focus on Every Student

## Objective 3: Facilitate High Quality Student Supports

### Community Schools

Community Schools are a strategy for aligning community resources for student success, family health and neighborhood safety. Community Schools are open extended hours and offer additional instructional time as well as recreational activities, arts, mental health screening/services, adult education and other important supports. In the past year, KCS has expanded this initiative to four more schools with the support of the Great Schools Partnership and the University of Tennessee. Community Schools now serve a total of 12 Knox County Schools.



### Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS is a prevention-oriented approach to helping all students achieve academic and social success by adopting and organizing a range of interventions that are applied to students based on their demonstrated level of need and addresses the role of the environment as it applies to development and improvement of behavior problems. Within the PBIS framework, there is an intentional effort to provide positive reinforcement when students meet school-wide behavioral expectations. Leadership teams from 24 Knox County Schools attended PBIS training in the summer of 2015. Several schools are showing remarkable progress, such as a reduction in office referrals by more than 50% or experiencing a more than 40% decrease in out-of-school suspensions. These results can lead to increased instructional time and achievement for students, and it frees up administrators' time to focus on the academic leadership of their schools.

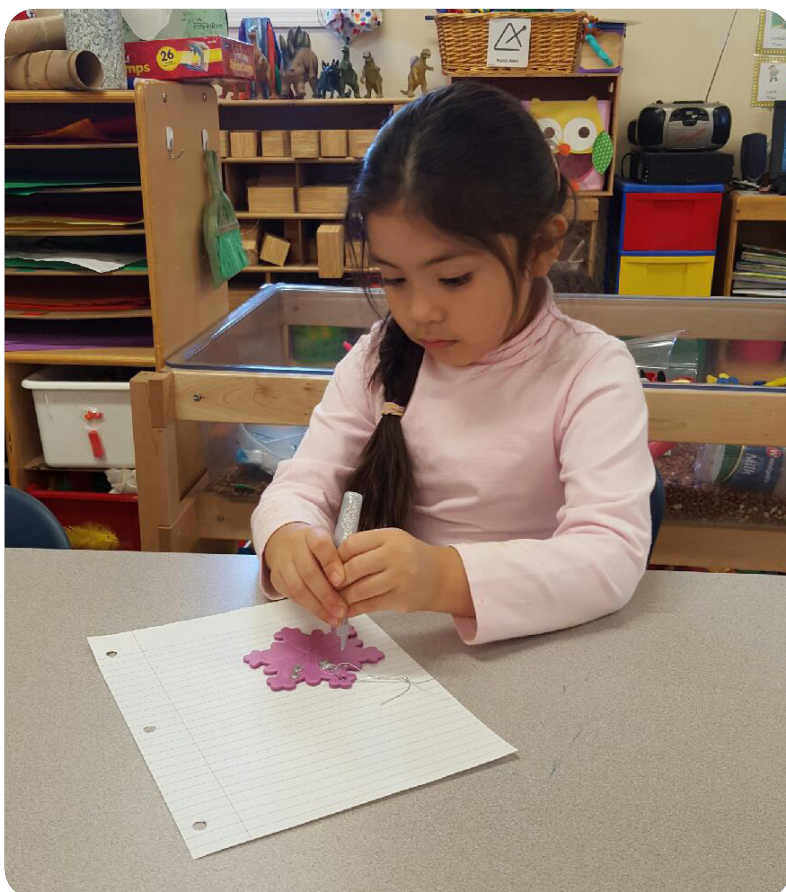


### Safe, Healthy, and Inviting Learning Environments

- **Safe** - This year, new detailed safety and security plans were implemented at the district and school levels to enhance KCS readiness to address the safety and security challenges facing schools today and in the future.
- **Healthy** - 53 schools are receiving free breakfast and lunch through the federal Community Eligibility Provision. There were 5,200 more meals served to hungry children each day in the 2014-15 school year than in previous years.
- **Inviting** - In addition to the daily work performed by KCS maintenance and custodial teams, significant renovations and additions to Shannondale and Mooreland Heights Elementary Schools were completed and over \$3M in physical plant upgrades were invested across the county.

# Goal 1: Focus on Every Student

## Objective 3: Facilitate High Quality Student Supports



### High Quality Early Learning Opportunities

KCS has made great progress in all three focus areas mentioned in the strategic plan:

- **Curriculum:** All 79 pre-K classrooms are using a comprehensive curriculum called High Scope that aligns to Tennessee State Standards. The curriculum includes literacy, math, social studies, science, technology, art, music, movement, and social-emotional learning.
- **Assessments:** Preschools are using a reliable, observation-based assessment called the Child Observation Record (COR Advantage) to measure student progress. This provides useful information to teachers and families regarding student development.
- **Capacity:** Preschools are operating at or near capacity. Title I schools, voluntary pre-K schools, special education schools, and Head Start maintain coordinated waiting lists to ensure that when vacancies becomes available, more students can be served. Additionally, an exciting pilot program will begin in Spring 2016 that educates special education students with typical peers for greater inclusion.

### Intensive Support for Schools with Significant Need

- Priority schools have received approximately \$2.5M through School Improvement and Priority School Planning grants and are using these funds for professional development (including topics such as cultural competency and positive behavior intervention), extended learning time for students, summer boost programs, tutoring, instructional support, extra planning time, and more.
- Through the development of the KCS Innovation Zone, Priority Schools are receiving extra support in the areas of numeracy, literacy, student behavior, and special education thanks to a three-year innovation grant from the Tennessee Department of Education.
- Two Focus Schools received grants to support intervention and tutoring. For example, some Mooreland Heights students are receiving onsite tutoring at a nearby housing complex on Saturday mornings, meaning education is being delivered to the doorstep.
- Last year the district implemented differentiated pay for substitutes to help address the issue of finding enough substitute teachers for high needs schools.
- In December 2014, the Federal Programs department conducted an in-depth analysis to evaluate program effectiveness. Additionally, all Title I schools are assigned a Federal Programs Supervisor to serve as a thought partner, address school challenges, and help navigate state/federal compliance systems.
- The district hosts a special recruitment fair and offers an early hiring period for high needs schools, matching available candidates to open positions during the hiring season.

# Goal 2: Invest in Our People

## Budget Discussions Enable a 2% Teacher Raise in 2015-16

A clear priority for the 2015-16 budget was to increase compensation for teachers. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Board of Education and County Commission enabled a 2% raise for all teachers in the Knox County Schools. In addition a 3% salary increase has been proposed for certified personnel in 2016-17.



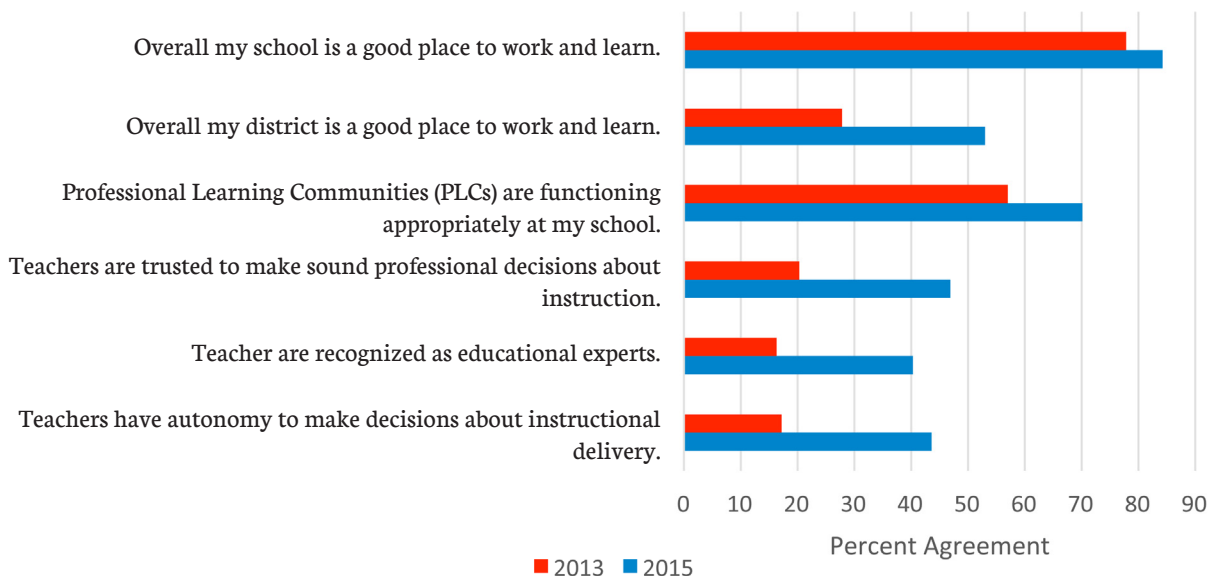
## Strategic Compensation

A committee was created to investigate options for revamping the Advance Perform Excel (APEX) strategic compensation program. Teachers on the committee developed various compensation models and conducted a listening tour at 10 schools to gather feedback. Additionally, all teachers were invited to participate in a survey. Final recommendations based on feedback and survey results will be forthcoming.



## 2015 Teacher Survey Results

The Knox County Schools administered its second teacher survey to obtain valuable input and feedback from educators. The paper/pencil survey, administered in the Spring of 2015, yielded 3,171 responses and showed significant improvement over 2013 results.



# Goal 2: Invest in Our People

## More Personalized Professional Development

Professional development is a key focus area of the strategic plan, and efforts are underway to redesign the KCS framework. The goal is to ensure that professional learning opportunities are coordinated and relevant to the needs of educators and support schools in reaching their strategic goals. KCS is collaborating with other school districts to share ideas and best practices for how to make professional development as effective as possible. The redesign work is expected to be complete by the end of August 2017.



## Other Goal 2 Highlights

- **TAP Schools:** KCS leveraged the TAP system (formally the Teacher Advancement Program) at 18 schools in 2010 and was able to continue the program at 12 schools through 2015-2016. Best practices developed in TAP schools have already informed work across the district and will continue to serve as a catalyst for effective teaching practices.
- **School Improvement Plans:** High performing schools are characterized by a collaborative culture where all stakeholders are focused on a clear vision and achieving a few key goals. School Teams Achieve Results (STAR) plans, introduced in 2014-15, are intended to guide schools in the process of analyzing data, identifying root causes, and developing a plan of action for improvement.
- **TeacherPreneur Grants:** TeacherPreneur grants encourage teachers to dream big and develop entrepreneurial solutions to classroom challenges. After a successful launch last year initiated by the Great Schools Partnership, 12 additional teachers won grants for their innovative proposals in December 2015.
- **Portfolio Assessments:** A strategic plan goal is to work with state officials on adjusting the teacher evaluation process to reflect different instructional contexts (e.g. early education, art class). In 2014-15, fine arts teachers were evaluated using a new assessment process: pre- and post- samples of student work are collected to demonstrate the amount of progress made by students. A similar approach is being piloted for Kindergarten and PE teachers in 2015-16.
- **New Teacher Academy:** Over 725 educators attended New Teacher Academy in 2014 and 2015. The New Teacher Academy celebrates and welcomes new teachers in the Knox County Schools, plus provides valuable training to assist them in understanding processes and expectations of the school district.
- **Leadership Academy:** Now in its sixth year, the Leadership Academy is a collaborative venture between the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the Knox County Schools that prepares talented individuals to become outstanding new school principals through a full-time, intensive 15-month fellowship program.
- **Tenure Celebrations:** Receptions were held to honor the 80 teachers who earned tenure in 2014 and the 100 teachers that received tenure in 2015.

# Goal 3: Partner with Our Stakeholders

## Advisory Teams

District leaders meet regularly with multiple advisory groups to receive input on key decisions and to address topics suggested by the advisory participants.

- **Teacher Advisory Committee** - a group of approximately 20 that includes classroom teacher representatives from early elementary, upper elementary, middle school and high school; arts, library, special education, CTE educators; as well as school counseling.
- **Principal Advisory Council** - includes a cross-section of 15-20 principals from across the district.
- **District Advisory Committee** - a group composed of parent representatives from all schools, community business leaders, Board of Education members and district staff.

## Expanded Community Relations Function

The KCS communications team continues to strengthen positive relations with community stakeholders and foster a “One Big Team” mentality, by:

- Doubling the number of participants in Principals for a Day, an annual event which raises awareness and support of school needs by inviting community leaders to spend time in our schools
- Initiating a new Principals for a Day Reciprocal Program which gives principals the opportunity to observe and learn about best leadership practices in area businesses and organizations
- Adding 29 new business/organizational partners, further increasing knowledge of and support for our schools
- Strengthening internal communications and teamwork within our schools and Leadership Team through training sessions on group dynamics, interpersonal skills, and leadership development



## Diverse Communication Channels

In addition to the Knox County Schools website, the Benchmarks online newsletter, Twitter updates, and phone messages, Knox County Schools started a Facebook page at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. The address is: [www.facebook.com/knoxschools](http://www.facebook.com/knoxschools). Simply “like” the page to begin having information show up on your feed.



## Performace Targets

Goal 1: Focus on Every Student	Goal 2015	Actual 2015	Goal 2016	Goal 2017	Goal 2018	Goal 2019
At least 75% of our kindergarteners will be ready for first grade based on our First Grade Readiness Indicator	55%	62%	60%	65%	70%	75%
At least 75% of our 3rd graders will be proficient or advanced in reading	55%	46%	60%	65%	70%	75%
At least 75% of our students in grades 3-8 will be proficient or advanced in reading/ELA and math	55%	53%	60%	65%	70%	75%
At least 80% of our high school students will be proficient or advanced in numeracy (Algebra I/II)	60%	64%	65%	70%	75%	80%
At least 90% of our high school students will be proficient or advanced in literacy (English I/II)	70%	74%	75%	80%	85%	90%
At least 90% of students will successfully complete "Diploma Plus Two"	70%	N/A	75%	80%	85%	90%

Goal 2: Invest in Our People	Goal 2015	Actual 2015	Goal 2016	Goal 2017	Goal 2018	Goal 2019
At least 95% of teachers, administrators, and all staff will meet or exceed expectations	91%	85%	92%	93%	94%	95%
Double the number of schools that have an overall Level 5 TVAAS growth composite	36	27	42	48	54	60
Retain at least 90% of our highest performing staff each year	90%	92%	90%	90%	90%	90%
2020 Pay Plan: Either our average teacher base pay we will be one of the top 20 school systems in Tennessee or we will increase our average teacher base pay 20% by 2020	N/A	Base				

Goal 3: Partner with Our Stakeholders	Goal 2015	Actual 2015	Goal 2016	Goal 2017	Goal 2018	Goal 2019
At least 90% of students and families find they benefit from their school's educational experiences	90%	N/A*	90%	90%	90%	90%
At least 90% of our school-based staff will consider their school a good place to work and learn	80%	85%	82%	85%	87%	90%
Double the number of meaningful partnerships	392	356	458	523	589	654

Our Future: A Culture of Excellence	Goal 2015	Actual 2015	Goal 2016	Goal 2017	Goal 2018	Goal 2019
Our district will earn a Level 5 composite in growth each year	5	5	5	5	5	5
Double the number of Tennessee Reward schools	6	6	7	8	9	10
At least 70% of our students will meet our College and Career Readiness Indicator	42%	42%	52%	58%	64%	70%
Cut in half all achievement gaps	32.8%	36.3%	29.1%	25.5%	21.9%	18.2%

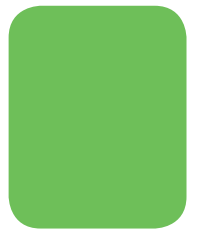
\*Question not asked

# Knox County Board of Education

Dr. James P. McIntyre, Jr.  
*Superintendent*

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Tracie Sanger, Vice-Chair (District 2)

Gloria Deathridge (District 1)  
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