



Knox County Schools



Deepening Our Work: Excellence for Every Child

Five-Year Strategic Plan
2014 – 2019

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As we look ahead to the next five years, we will continue to work with all of our stakeholders - students, families, staff, community members and our School Board - to deepen and accelerate our important educational work. This five-year strategic plan outlines the commitments, investments, strategies and initiatives that we will pursue in order to prepare each of our students for a bright, competitive and successful future, and bolster the strength and vitality of our remarkable community. In short, this is our community's blueprint to achieve our ambitious educational goal of Excellence for Every Child.

- Dr. Jim McIntyre
Superintendent

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

Why is this important?

Our passion for high-level student learning drives all of our work. We will focus on the specific learning and support needs of every one of our 57,000 individual students to ensure that they are academically successful, college and career ready, economically competitive, and personally fulfilled in an increasingly complex world.



Performance Targets

At least **75% of our kindergarteners will be ready for first grade** based on our First Grade Readiness Indicator

At least **75% of our 3rd graders will be proficient or advanced** in reading

At least **75% of our students in grades 3-8 will be proficient or advanced** in reading/ ELA and math

At least **80% of our high school students will be proficient or advanced** in numeracy (Algebra I/ II)

At least **90% of our high school students will be proficient or advanced** in literacy (English I/II)

At least **90% of students** will successfully complete Diploma Plus 2

How will we do this?

We promise to personalize learning, guarantee excellence in the classroom, and facilitate high quality student supports so that every student can come to school ready and excited to learn.

Objective 1: Guarantee Excellence in the Classroom

- Maintain high universal standards for every student
- Strengthen students' academic foundations
- Cultivate the "Whole Child" by providing diverse learning opportunities
- Improve district-wide systems to monitor student learning
- Demand operational and administrative excellence to enable effective education

Objective 2: Personalize Learning

- Design technology-enabled personalized learning
- Differentiate instruction to meet student learning needs
- Structure our schools to best meet the learning needs of students
- Continue to provide multiple pathways to success

Objective 3: Facilitate High Quality Student Supports

- Strengthen and scale Community Schools
- Identify barriers to learning and provide academic interventions in all schools
- Expand high quality early-learning opportunities
- Ensure that all students have a safe, healthy, and inviting learning environment
- Provide intensive support for schools with significant need



Goal 2: Invest in Our People

Why is this important?

Our students can only achieve at their highest levels when our teachers, leaders, and staff also excel in their work. We will consistently build the capacity of our people by encouraging them to serve as a community of learners and leaders, so that together we can all strengthen our skills and learn new ones.



Performance Targets

At least **95% of teachers, administrators, and all staff** will meet or exceed expectations

Double the number of schools that have an overall Level 5 TVAAS growth composite

Retain at least 90% of our highest performing staff each year

2020 Pay Plan: Either our average teacher base pay will be **one of the top 20** school systems in Tennessee or we will increase our average teacher base pay **20%** by 2020

How will we do this?

We commit to supporting our staff every step of the way, treating them as the respected professionals they are, and celebrating their remarkable accomplishments in educating our students.

Objective 1: Build and Support Our Community of Learners

- Support and build the instructional capacity of our educators
- Improve teaching quality through collaboration
- Provide adequate individual planning time for all teachers
- Ensure all staff members receive calibrated, timely, and meaningful performance feedback
- Build capacity of our staff through high quality, tailored, and relevant professional development
- Create a regional school support structure

Objective 2: Build and Support Our Community of Leaders

- Encourage staff to be educational leaders and creative problem-solvers
- Develop and articulate robust career pathways
- Develop mid-career leadership academies
- Articulate clear expectations for school principals
- Clarify flexibility and autonomy for teachers and principals
- Give more autonomy to effective teachers and principals

Objective 3: Value Our Hardworking People

- Respect our educators as professionals
- Secure competitive wages for all staff
- Redesign our strategic compensation program
- Create a staff appreciation initiative
- Transform Human Resources into a talent management partner for schools



Goal 3: Partner with Our Stakeholders

Why is this important?

We believe that our district is more capable of preparing our students for a bright future when we benefit from the talents, resources, and support of our broader community and all the stakeholders within it.



Performance Targets

At least **90% of students and families** find they benefit from their school's educational experiences

At least **90% of our school-based staff** will consider their school a good place to work and learn

Double the number of meaningful partnerships

How will we do this?

We will more closely collaborate with all our partners to form “one big team” working for our students, inviting and earning stakeholder feedback so we can continue to know more and do better, and elevate our commitment to customer service and professionalism.

Objective 1: Build and Strengthen Our “One Big Team”

- Develop a community relations function
- Share our district's exciting work with all stakeholders

Objective 2: Invite and Earn Stakeholder Feedback

- Develop and promote differentiated stakeholder engagement opportunities
- Employ advisory groups to inform district decisions
- Create systems to track and address feedback from stakeholders

Objective 3: Improve Customer Service and Communication

- Uphold high levels of professionalism and customer service
- Diversify and streamline external communication channels
- Explore the use of a Parent Resource Center
- Strengthen internal communications
- Develop and disseminate messaging toolkits for schools



Our Future: A Culture of Excellence

Why is this important?

We are proud of the progress our students have made, but recognize that if we are to achieve our ambitious goals, we must collectively create a pervasive Culture of Excellence. Only then will every child have the opportunity to successfully reach their highest potential, regardless of whatever challenging circumstances they may face.



Performance Targets

Earn a **Level 5 composite in growth** each year

Double the number of Tennessee Reward schools

At least **70% of our students** will meet our College and Career Readiness Indicator

Cut in half all achievement gaps

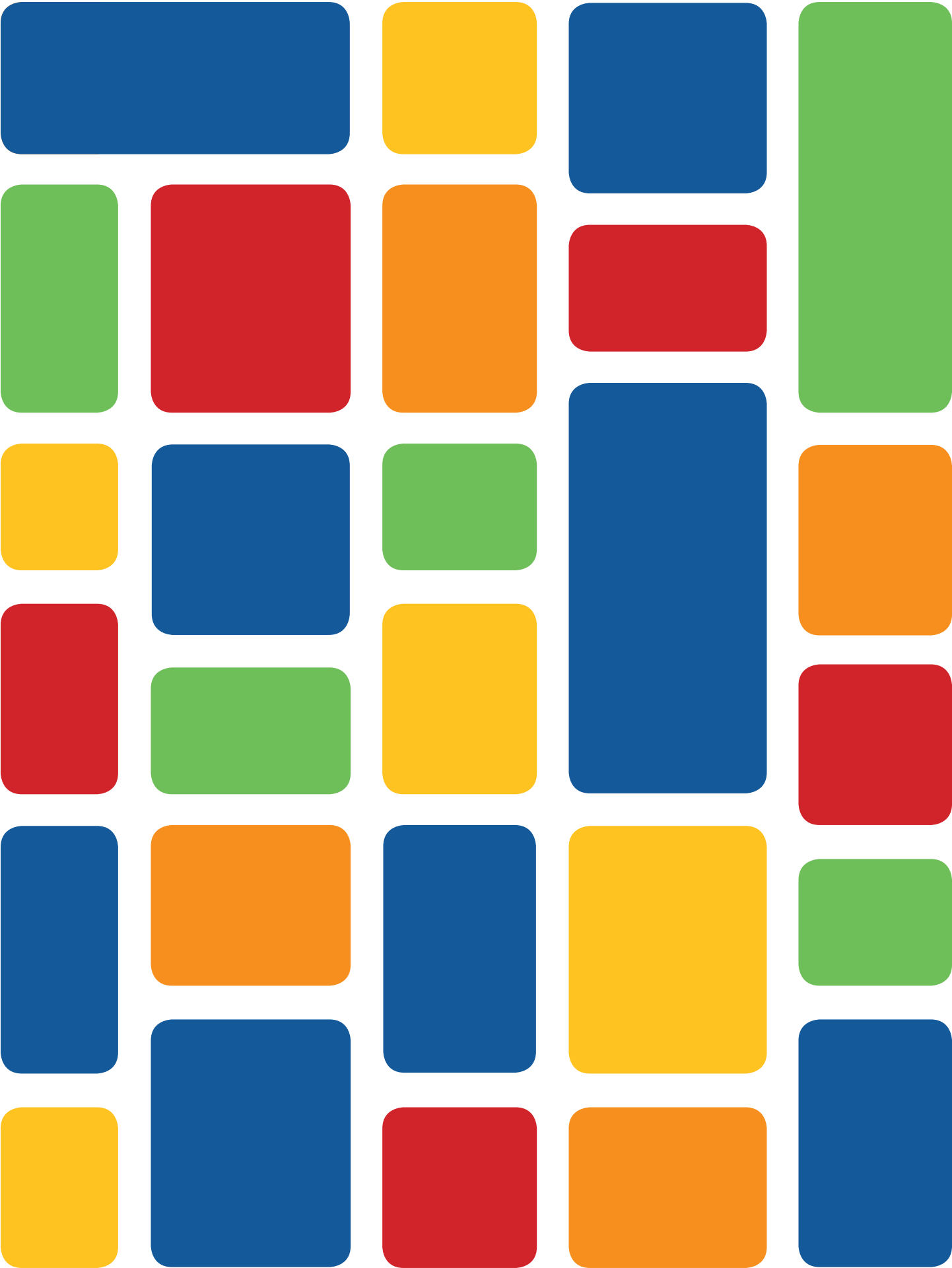
How will we do this?

We believe that our strategy, as defined by our three goal areas, will help us create a Culture of Excellence that will ultimately lead to us meeting our ambitious vision of *Excellence for Every Child*.

To us, a Culture of Excellence is exemplified by:

- Every school is a great school;
- Every student is nurtured and academically successful;
- Every staff member is a steward of excellence; and
- Every stakeholder is invested and productively engaged.





INTRODUCTION

We are a school district with a clear track record of delivering high quality educational experiences for students. We have done this by faithfully implementing the strategies delineated in our first strategic plan, Excellence for All Children, which was adopted by the Board of Education in 2009. The innovative and research-based improvements outlined in the 2009 plan have been powerful vehicles for substantially enhancing the learning opportunities for our more than 57,000 students. Over the last five years, we have made tremendous strides in improving the quality, rigor, and diversity of instructional programs so that our students can achieve in both academics and life. This has resulted in our consistently outperforming all comparable districts with similar demographics, as well as the state as a whole.

Over the past few years, our district's high school graduation rate has increased from 79% in 2008 to 88% for the class of 2013. We have seen consistent increases in student academic proficiency in virtually all subject areas as measured by the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) and state End of Course (EOC) assessments. For the 2012-13 school year - the most recent academic year for which data is available - we scored a level five composite growth index on the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS), the highest level attainable. Perhaps most remarkably, this past November our district earned straight As in student achievement on the state report card – for the first time ever! Our success, however, did not happen by accident. It happened as a result of the strategic instructional investments we, as a community, made to improve student learning.

As we look ahead to the next five years, we will continue to work with all of our stakeholders - students, families, staff, community members and our School Board - to deepen and accelerate this important educational work. This five-year strategic plan outlines the commitments, investments, strategies and initiatives that we will pursue in order to prepare each of our students for a bright, competitive and successful future, and bolster the strength and vitality of our remarkable community. In short, this is our community's blueprint to achieve our ambitious educational goal of Excellence for Every Child.



WHO WE ARE

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, and 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 our school district in teaching, in management and particularly in student learning. In short, we envision a future where we will achieve academic excellence for every child.

Our Work:

We will advance student academic development and achievement. Each student must be challenged academically and graduate fully prepared for post-secondary learning opportunities, a rewarding career, a meaningful role in the American democracy, and an enlightened and fulfilling life. To enable our work and realize our vision, we offer our strategy and our Commitments to Our Community.

Our Strategy:

If we:

- Ensure effective, engaging, and personalized instruction (Goal 1);
- Support, guide, and develop our staff to ensure strong and consistent teaching in all classrooms (Goal 2); and
- Earn and enlist broad community engagement to help every student come to school excited and ready to learn (Goal 3);

Then, we will create a Culture of Excellence that will enable us to:

- Significantly and universally enhance student learning and academic success;
- Close achievement gaps; and
- Realize excellence for every child!

Commitments to Our Community:

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

These commitments articulate how we, as a school district, must work each and every day to best serve our students and their learning. We do not take these commitments lightly, and they serve as foundational organizational principles that unite every member of our staff. Each of us needs to understand and embody them so that we can then implement the goals, objectives and initiatives outlined in this strategic plan.

Goal 1: Focus on Every Student



prom·ise | 'präməs | *n.* **1:** a declaration or assurance that one will do a particular thing or that a particular thing will happen. **2:** the quality of potential excellence.

Our passion for high-level student learning drives all of our work. We will focus on the specific learning and support needs of every one of our 57,000 individual students to ensure that they are academically successful, college and career ready, economically competitive, and personally fulfilled in an increasingly complex world. We **promise** to personalize learning, guarantee excellence in the classroom, and facilitate high quality student supports so that every student can come to school ready and excited to learn.

Objectives

**Guarantee
Excellence
in Teaching
and Learning**

**Personalize
Learning**

**Facilitate
High Quality
Student
Supports**

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



Introduction:

Our passion for student learning is our primary focus and drives all of our work. When making our daily decisions – those big and small – we consistently ask ourselves, “What is best for students?” We do this for the simple reason that we want every student to be academically successful, college and career ready, economically competitive, and personally fulfilled in an increasingly complex world. To accomplish this, we must focus on every student. We promise to do everything we can to ensure that all students receive rigorous, relevant, engaging, diverse, and personalized learning experiences that propel them to reach their highest potential and become life-long learners.

Objective 1: Guarantee Excellence in the Classroom

Our students need to be sufficiently prepared not only to live, but to also thrive in an increasingly complex world. In a knowledge-based economy where individuals are asked to solve problems, think critically, collaborate, and communicate effectively, we must ensure that all of our students have the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to be successful. We simply must have excellent teaching in every classroom in every school across our district every day. It is only through consistently high quality instruction that we can fulfill our promise of providing rigorous, relevant, and engaging learning experiences for all of our students.

Initiatives:

1. *Maintain high universal standards for every student*

The state of Tennessee has adopted rigorous academic standards and we will continue to embrace uniformly high and comprehensive expectations regarding teaching and learning in every classroom, in every school throughout our district. Every child can learn at high levels, and has the capacity to achieve his or her fullest potential, regardless of income, race, geography, disability or language. Realizing this full potential will require enhancing cultural competency, continuing to broaden inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education setting, and focusing resources to support schools with a high proportion of low-income students. We may also need to provide more guidance about how our rigorous academic standards translate to student mastery and ensure that a grade of an “A” in one classroom is the equivalent of an “A” in another classroom.

2. *Strengthen students’ academic foundations*

For all of our students to master the appropriate skills and knowledge to become creative, critical thinkers and problem solvers, they must first establish solid academic foundations. These strong building blocks will allow every student to become proficient in more complex academic and non-academic tasks throughout their school careers to become successful 21st century learners.

a. Focus on math and reading proficiencies in every grade. Increasing student achievement cannot be accomplished without focusing on these two critical areas of learning. We will ensure that every student can read proficiently by 3rd grade, and continue to consistently read at or above grade level throughout his or her academic career. Literacy is not only critical to a student’s academic success (once you’ve learned to read, you then read to learn!), but also to his or her lifelong ability to be a productive member of our community and society. Focusing on mathematics and incorporating it into a larger STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) curriculum will also give students essential foundational knowledge and access to broader future learning opportunities.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



b. Ensure that all elementary teachers are effective teachers of reading. Every elementary student simply must be proficient or advanced in reading; it is the gateway to their future academic success. Therefore, every elementary school teacher needs to be knowledgeable about and skilled in the complex science of teaching reading. We will actively support our elementary teachers in acquiring or enhancing this expertise through focused professional development and coaching. For those who are expert in proven methods of teaching reading, we will provide them with the latitude and flexibility to continue to meet the learning needs of their students and to also serve as valuable resources for their fellow teachers.

c. Provide students with rigorous learning experiences that are authentic and relevant (e.g. applied mathematics, reading scientific texts). Learning, at its core, should be exciting and fun. We want all of our students to be skilled and voracious learners, so we will continue to provide them multiple opportunities to access educational experiences with engaging and relevant content. By providing learning opportunities in diverse content areas, students will also be better able to self-direct their learning by selecting experiences that are of most interest to them.

3. *Cultivate the “Whole Child” by providing diverse learning opportunities*

Along with strong foundational math and reading skills, we must work to ensure our students are well-rounded, happy, life-long learners. Through increased exposure to new activities and experiences, including those in the arts, music, leadership, wellness, cultural awareness, and community service, our students will develop into curious, enlightened, well-rounded and fulfilled individuals. To ensure this outcome, we have developed a “Diploma Plus 2” performance target that allows high school students to set their own learning and leadership goals. For example, in addition to earning a high school diploma and achieving a certain ACT score, we will encourage every graduating senior to select one additional metric that reflects their interests, whether that be completing a rigorous college-level course (i.e. AP, IB, dual-enrollment) or performing an artistic showcase.

a. Promote inter-disciplinary project-based learning so students can explore their curiosities and learn through doing. We will create active learning environments that value students’ diverse learning styles so that all students can be successful. Authentic problem solving can be messy and challenging, and our students will need to creatively and collaboratively determine how to identify, approach, and solve challenges, both in classrooms and in the real world. They will need to make connections across content areas and grade levels and be actively involved in managing their own learning.

b. Broaden academic and non-academic opportunities for all students so they can experience, as early as elementary school, classes and extracurricular experiences that are most interesting to them. This will include academic courses, such as art, music, and foreign language, as well as more non-traditional learning opportunities such as service learning, internships, extracurricular activities, and athletics. Academics are incredibly important but so are building skills such as teamwork, time management, self-advocacy, public speaking, and learning from failure.



GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



c. **Expose students to broad and varied perspectives** so that our students and staff can appreciate diverse viewpoints to enrich their learning experiences. As a district, we value all forms of diversity and believe that appreciating differences leads to self-awareness, empathy, and collaboration - all critical components of student learning and development. We will embrace the importance of promoting diversity within our schools and district so that we, as an organization, continue to benefit from the rich tapestry of culture, background and perspective in our school system.

4. *Improve district-wide systems to monitor student learning*

As educators, we need to know how well each of our students is learning what we are teaching. This cannot be done without assessment and close monitoring, which may take the form of a written standardized test required by the state, or it may be a quick verbal check for understanding executed by a teacher in her classroom. While we will avoid any situation where students are assessed more than is necessary or appropriate, it is important to recognize that on-going, authentic and aligned assessments are critical components of the teaching and learning cycle. Having this information will allow us to continually adjust our instruction to maximize student learning, make good educational decisions for our youth, and provide every child with truly personalized learning experiences.

a. **Design district-wide student monitoring systems** that are reliable, aligned, informative, and clear to inform learning and instruction. This will likely require us to continue to refine, in close partnership with our educators, our data warehouse infrastructure, so that data can be accessible, easy to understand (for all stakeholders), and easy to use. Our goal is to ensure coherence and consistency regarding the data we collect and use so that it can empower teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in student learning and address them in real time, and also help students reflect upon their own progress.

b. **Re-examine the assessment landscape** to ensure purpose and coherence. Our students should only take assessments that are either required by state and federal policy or are valuable in providing the right type of data to inform and support teaching and learning. Our assessments should be primarily driven by teachers' need for information and must be streamlined so that they are not redundant. Additionally, they must be designed and implemented to minimally disrupt valuable instructional time.



GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



c. Continue our commitment to collaborative student progress monitoring. We will embrace and enhance our Professional Learning Community (PLC) structures, as they are one of our primary mechanisms for carefully monitoring student learning on a regular basis. For our PLCs to be constructive and effective, all of our school principals and other instructional leaders must understand their purpose as collaborative planning informed by student progress monitoring. This type of monitoring should not be limited exclusively to student test scores, but can incorporate student work products, formative assessments, and other information gleaned from teachers as to how a student is learning. We will clearly articulate PLC expectations and provide teachers the tools, support, and time to work together effectively.

d. Continue to build the capacity of our educators to make student-centered data-informed decisions. As a district, we will continue to provide professional growth opportunities for our staff around effective data collection and use. We want all of our educators to be able to design and implement meaningful assessments to determine student progress and then to adapt their instruction accordingly. We also recognize many educators are doing an exceptional job of effectively using student data to inform instruction and we will highlight their work, too.

5. Demand operational and administrative excellence to enable effective education

With nearly 8,000 staff members, we do much more than educate children. We also have a host of administrative responsibilities. Whether we are managing school buildings, budgets, or buses, we must be respectful, responsible, and responsive. Classroom instruction can be significantly enhanced when operational responsibilities are done well. We will hold ourselves to the highest standards and be accountable to attaining this level of organizational excellence.

a. Evaluate educational programming and allocate our resources to most effectively bolster student learning. To secure the highest levels of student learning, we need to know what is working well. Through continued program evaluation and return on investment analyses, we will better understand how our educational spending results in improved student outcomes, which will influence how we allocate future resources. This data will help determine what initiatives we need to continue, stop, or start. Additionally, we must continue to carefully monitor our operational and administrative expenditures, to ensure our community's financial resources are utilized efficiently.



¹ Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) – Developed by educational researcher, Richard DuFour, are school-based structures that allow teachers to work collaboratively to inform and improve their instructional practice on a weekly basis. Teachers use inquiry, data analysis, model lessons, collaborative planning and sharing of research-based best practices and effective pedagogical strategies to seek to improve and enhance their instructional practice together.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



b. Ensure operational alignment and coherence. We need to ensure that all aspects of our instructional work are supported and reinforced by our administrative and operational efforts. All of our staff members, including those in central office support departments, will need to clearly understand how their work enables and supports the critical work of teaching and learning that happens in our classrooms.

c. Maximize efficiency and effectiveness in operational functions to support the classroom. Transportation, facilities, technology, finance, payroll, human resources, food services, and security are all examples of operational functions that, when done effectively, enable and support teaching and learning in our schools. We will develop measures of effective management in each of these functional areas – key performance indicators – and work to achieve high levels of efficiency and excellence.

Objective 2: Personalize Learning

Each of our more than 57,000 students is unique and deserves learning opportunities tailored to meet his or her individual needs. This is critical to ensuring that every student graduates with the skills, knowledge, and mindset to be college and career ready, economically competitive, and personally fulfilled. Additionally, in order to effectively personalize learning we will actively engage students and incorporate their voice and choice in determining what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

Initiatives:

1. *Design technology-enabled personalized learning*

Technology, and in particular instructional technology, has seemingly limitless potential in providing our students learning opportunities that exist outside the confines of the classroom's four walls. Students can be in the driver's seat as they navigate virtually infinite "on-demand" resources. This will elevate their curiosity, accelerate their learning, and situate them as confident and capable 21st century learners. Instructional technology also has the potential to transform teaching and strengthen teacher-to-learner and learner-to-learner relationships. Our educators can use technology to provide even more creative, engaging and rigorous instruction for students, and leverage today's incredible technology tools to help differentiate their teaching. Our students, then, will transition from consumers to producers as they actively synthesize content, apply knowledge, and make connections to what they already know. We have already begun this exciting work. In fall 2013, we implemented a groundbreaking Personalized Learning Environment (PLE) pilot program in eleven of our eighty-nine schools, which we branded the School Technology Challenge. Looking forward to the next five years, we aim to:

a. Provide appropriate instructional technology to every teacher and every student. Every child deserves access to effective, personalized instruction and the opportunity to be successful. To achieve this, we will embrace a district-wide implementation of personalized learning supported by technology for all students. In grades 4-12, we envision a 1:1 deployment of technology: one digital device (laptop or tablet) for each student and one for each teacher. In the earlier grades, comprehensive instructional technology will be deployed in a "blended learning" model². At all levels, technology will be used to facilitate personalized student learning through challenging and age-appropriate educational activities.

² Blended learning refers to the combination of online and face-to-face learning.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



b. Design the requisite technology environment that includes high quality and high functioning hardware, software, infrastructure and support. We are proud of our investment in comprehensive job-embedded teacher support in the form of Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge (TPaCK) Coaches. These full-time teacher leaders provide additional support to their peers as they make the transition to technology-enabled PLEs for students. They are invaluable and we will have one full-time TPaCK Coach assigned to each PLE school. We will also further invest in technical support personnel and physical infrastructure (such as wireless networks) to support the integration of instructional technology in the classroom. All of these components are critical to effectively using technology as a teaching and learning tool in our schools.

c. Learn from our Personalized Learning Environment schools' innovative practices and incorporate those lessons learned into our future strategies. During the 2013-14 school year, each of our eleven PLE schools had the autonomy to design and implement its own personalized learning model. We recognized the value of this natural experiment and routinely solicited their feedback so as we move forward in expanding PLE to all schools, we have already learned valuable lessons and best practices to improve student outcomes.

d. Develop a sustainable replacement schedule for instructional devices. As we move toward developing goals and strategies to enhance the capacity of our instructional staff, we will also need to guarantee that all of our technology equipment is appropriately deployed, maintained, and replaced at the end of its useful life. We cannot afford to lose the momentum of exciting, well-prepared lessons to lack of access to instructional tools. Therefore, we will develop a sustainable district-wide strategy for the procurement and replacement of instructional technology devices.

e. Maximize the functionality of our learning management system. We want our district's Learning Management System (LMS) to seamlessly deliver content, promote robust and authentic digital interaction and collaboration, and use a cloud-based repository to store digital resources. We will launch our district-wide adoption of a new LMS, Canvas, in the 2014-15 school year. It will allow teachers to manage student learning through assignments, activities, and educational experiences that can differ for each individual student or for each group of students who are at the same level of mastery. As our educators grow in the practice of differentiated instruction, our LMS will enable our teachers to simultaneously support all their students' learning needs.



GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



2. Differentiate instruction to meet student learning needs

Every student has different strengths, interests, learning preferences, and areas for growth. They also learn at different rates. Therefore, we will enhance our use of data and research-based methods to identify what makes every child a unique learner and provide him or her personalized learning experiences. As educators, we must support students who are struggling, further challenge those who are succeeding, and enable all our students to reach their full potential.

- a. **Continue to support our educators as they differentiate their core classroom instruction** for their students. Great teachers have always provided excellent instruction that is responsive to the individual needs, learning styles, personalities and strengths of their students. Expertly differentiating teaching, effectively grouping students, using collaborative problem-based and project-based learning, integrating technology, drawing upon deep pedagogical skills while building and maintaining meaningful student relationships is tremendously challenging. Therefore, we will provide all of our educators access to high quality supports and resources for effective differentiation, and provide continuous, accurate, and helpful feedback. This will help them build their capacity to individualize instruction that allows students to work at their own pace (accelerate/remediate) and explore instructional concepts through areas of personal interest that ensures engagement and deep learning.
- b. **Expand opportunities for advancement upon mastery.** Personalizing learning affords students the ability to progress through the curriculum at a pace best suited for them. We will explore the potential benefits of transitioning (or partially transitioning) from a traditional grading scale to standards-based grading³. Ideally, our students could move onto the next unit, course, or standard once they mastered the content regardless of when that mastery occurs. In other words, a student could progress independently of “seat time” (e.g. how many hours they log in a particular class) and instead, progress based on when they mastered the course material. Any such system would be developed and designed in partnership with classroom teachers, as they are intimately familiar with the content matter and are ideally positioned to help determine effective grading practices.
- c. **Effective implementation of appropriate academic interventions.** To meet all of our students’ learning needs, we will align all resources at both the school and district level to create a single, well-integrated system of instruction and intervention informed by student achievement data. Students who are not making adequate academic gains will be identified through a universal screen early in their educational careers so progress can be frequently monitored, academic skills increased, and the negative effects of academic failure lessened. We will support all schools in identifying the most appropriate and effective interventions (e.g. tutoring, academic recovery programs) to maximize student success. Furthermore, we will do this with the utmost of expediency to minimize wait times for students and their families.



³ Standards-based grading - This alternative grading system does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. All of the student’s work is used to assess the student’s mastery of the essential standards, providing a detailed picture of which standards a student has mastered. Many researchers and practitioners believe standards-based grading is more accurate, more consistent, more meaningful, and more supportive of student learning.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



d. Ensure that every student is challenged. We must provide rigorous educational experiences and activities for all students, including those who are excelling at the highest levels of learning. Students who achieve advanced concepts will have access to even more challenging instruction so they can continue to accelerate their learning.

3. *Structure our schools to best meet the learning needs of students*

We must not fall into the trap of passively agreeing to “do school as it has always been done.” Instead, we should challenge traditional assumptions and conventional wisdom to craft learning environments that prioritize improving student achievement, above all else. This will likely require us to re-examine many of the long-held formal structures deeply rooted in our society’s conception of school and schooling.

a. Modify time in schools, both in terms of the school day and the school year, to maximize student learning. We will examine, with considerable input from our stakeholders, how the school schedule and the academic calendar may be used to maximize student learning. We will explore the feasibility of transitioning from a traditional school calendar to a “Balanced Calendar”⁴, which can provide students more immediate intervention and enrichment opportunities. Additionally, we will also investigate transitioning our high school schedules away from a block schedule and back to a six or seven period day to increase the amount of time students spend on core instruction. Lastly, we will continue to encourage our schools to develop innovative school schedules based on the needs of their students, families, and communities.

b. Enable departmentalization of upper-elementary grades so teachers can focus on building their expertise in a few subject areas rather than serve as “generalists.” Traditionally, elementary school teachers are expected to be “jacks of all trades,” responsible for delivering all core instruction (e.g. math, reading, science, and social studies) to all of their students. This arrangement, however, can limit elementary teachers’ abilities to truly master certain content areas, particularly in upper elementary grades (i.e. fourth and fifth grades), where the standards are significantly more complex and rigorous. By providing elementary schools the opportunity to departmentalize, which would reassign upper-elementary school teachers to focus on one or two content areas, they could build the instructional expertise of their staffs.

c. Re-examine and possibly expand the role of summer and out-of-school time. We believe that in today’s hyper-connected world, learning can happen anywhere anytime, and we want to maximize the opportunities we provide our students to learn outside of the traditional school day. Therefore, we will explore the possibility of expanding the role of summer and out-of-school time learning. This may lead us to partnering with nonprofits, community organizations, and industry to diversify and expand our programmatic offerings to more students.



⁴ A Balanced Calendar reduces the long summer break and simply apportions these days throughout the school year, producing more frequent breaks, called intersessions. Intersessions can be structured various ways, which range from three weeks of pure vacation to providing academic programming (both interventions and enrichment opportunities) for two of those three weeks.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



4. Continue to provide multiple pathways to success

We believe strongly that all students can be successful, but recognize that not all students may find success in the same way or in the same learning environment. We commit to providing a variety of educational options for students (in particular, choices besides the traditional comprehensive high school at the secondary level) so that each student might find success in the setting that makes the most sense for him or her. This includes Advanced Placement (AP), honors courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, magnet school options, dual enrollment and dual credit experiences, and other specialized programming.

a. Continue to design innovative and non-traditional educational models that were either outlined in the 2009 strategic plan, *Excellence for All Children*, or that will be developed in the next five years based on research and best practices. We have already opened three innovative high schools (the L&N STEM Academy, the Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy, and the Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State), created a School of Communications magnet at Fulton High School, a STEAM pathway at Green Elementary and Vine Middle Schools, established an International Baccalaureate program at West High School, and applied for an International Baccalaureate magnet program at Bearden Middle School. We will build upon that momentum and continue our commitment to providing our students with educational options where they will experience success. We will also design engaging middle grades and elementary options.

b. Think strategically about the role of charter schools. Charter schools are almost inevitable in Tennessee's current education policy landscape. Our community does not necessarily have a philosophical opposition to charter schools. We believe that if designed and implemented well, charters could provide strong educational opportunities for our students and families aligned to our educational goals. We insist, however, that any charter schools authorized within Knox County must be high quality and offer a viable education to our children. We will carefully consider the collaborative partnerships our district can forge with these new entities, as they may become part of the education portfolio in Knox County. Additionally, we will investigate the possibility of developing an in-district charter school for which the Board of Education would serve as the applicant and governing board.

c. Realize the full potential of distance learning and digital learning opportunities as a mechanism to provide students and families more choice in selecting academic courses. Technology can be a cost effective and powerful tool for equity by providing our students more access and opportunity. They would not be limited to the programs within their "home" school and could take advantage of a broader array of courses and experiential learning opportunities.

d. Continue to provide high quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. CTE courses are powerful tools to effectively prepare our students for community colleges, technical schools, four-year colleges and universities, and more broadly, for meaningful careers. These programs are uniquely designed to broaden our students' experiences by demonstrating the relevance of academic content through real-world application. We will redouble our commitment to providing all students access to rigorous, engaging, project-based opportunities that occur in authentic learning environments.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



Objective 3: Facilitate High Quality Student Supports

For some of our students there are factors outside the classroom that can affect their learning inside the classroom. We know that comprehensive health and wellness supports and broad access to social services can promote children's overall well-being so they can come to school ready and excited to learn. It takes a committed, well-trained, and coordinated support team to ensure the highest levels of student learning. While we cannot necessarily provide all the services required to address all outside distractions to learning, we have a responsibility to offer or facilitate a range of strong supports for students who need them.

Initiatives:

1. *Strengthen and scale Community Schools*

Schools are integral parts of a community and we are proud of the Community Schools we have launched in the past five years. These schools have an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, and youth and community engagement that lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. They address challenges to student learning through access to services, extended learning opportunities, and partnership with families and neighborhoods. In short, they provide way to share our district's work with all community members and build trusting relationships through collaboration. We are proud of how beautifully our Community Schools have developed over the past several years and are excited to learn from them as we expand this initiative to more schools throughout our district.

2. *Identify barriers to learning and provide appropriate interventions in all schools*

Our students deserve every opportunity to become their best selves and in order to come to school ready and excited to learn, they may need some additional social and emotional supports. The first step, however, is diagnosing what factors may be holding students back from learning.

a. Ensure a systematic identification process for all at-risk students. Our district will have one comprehensive identification process so that the same protocol and the same terminology are used by all of the adults involved (e.g. educators, service providers, government agencies, etc.). This protocol, which was discussed previously in terms of academically at-risk students, will also be used to help behaviorally at-risk students. It will support our efforts at implementing a district-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) initiative that provides intensive and intentional supports for behaviorally at-risk students. Moreover, PBIS will also create an opportunity for our district to more meaningfully partner with outside agencies and service providers. We will also redouble our efforts to maximize the effectiveness of Professional Intervention Teams and School Support Teams so that more attention can be paid to students who have social, emotional, or other barriers, which may not have yet been identified.



GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT



b. Develop, communicate, and oversee a portfolio of effective student supports. We will select and faithfully implement student supports that are research-based and proven to positively improve student learning and well-being.

To do this we will need to:

1. Provide consistent and high quality training to those responsible for delivering these supports and interventions;
2. Develop program evaluation systems to gauge how effective these initiatives are so we can course-correct in a timely fashion when necessary;
3. Transition to confidential, secure digital student case files so all service providers are aware of a student's academic, social, and emotional history.

3. *Expand high quality early-learning opportunities*

Research consistently shows the value of exposing children, as young as three years old, to rich learning environments to develop their academic, social, and emotional well-being. We will do everything we can to ensure that our youngest students arrive in kindergarten ready to learn. First, we will examine our early-learning curriculum to ensure appropriate rigor and alignment to our state's K-12 standards. Second, we will assess and select a research-based early childhood assessment that secures valuable student learning data and is also appropriate for young children. Lastly, we will continue to maintain, and possibly increase, the several early childhood education programs we offer and ensure that all available capacity is utilized.

4. *Ensure that all students have a safe, healthy, and inviting learning environment*

To ensure that all students and staff come to school each day excited and ready to learn, we will provide an instructional setting that is conducive to student learning.

a. Safe – While each of our schools has both a safety plan and a school security officer onsite, we want to strengthen our efforts over the next five years. We will continue to enhance security measures, encourage our stakeholders to more regularly share their concerns (as that signals a high public confidence in our security services), and continue to improve our customer service.

b. Healthy – We are proud to serve 53,000 nutritious meals every day to our students to fuel their academic success. In the next five years, we will strengthen our efforts at providing affordable, nutritious, and delicious meals in friendly, safe, and sanitary environments. In addition, we will continue to adhere to our exacting standards in school environmental safety and air quality, and actively promote student and staff wellness.

c. Inviting – As cornerstones of our community, our schools must be clean, comfortable and inviting to the children and adults who walk their hallways. While we have a dedicated staff committed to overseeing the appearance and functionality of each of our buildings, we need to maximize our resources in this area. This means guaranteeing that all maintenance requests are handled in a timely and professional manner, satisfactorily resolved, and diligently documented. It also means that our schools have appropriate quantities of instructional materials, furniture, and supplies.

GOAL 1: FOCUS ON EVERY STUDENT

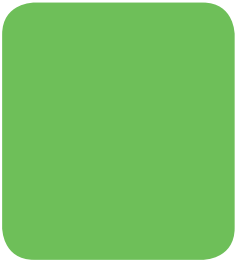


5. Provide intensive support for schools with significant need

We recognize that in order to achieve academic success for every student, we may need to provide some additional support to schools that have struggled with acute challenges. Schools with high concentrations of students in poverty, those with difficulty in hiring exceptional talent, and those schools where student academic outcomes are not reflective of their full potential may require additional resources and concentrated support in order to maximize student success.

a. Targeted support for Focus and Priority Schools. Through our Office of Innovation and School Support, we will continue to provide targeted and intensive support for schools that have been identified by the Tennessee Department of Education as Focus or Priority Schools. This will include leadership coaching and close supervision, thought partnership, assistance with data analysis and effective strategy development as well as regular, in-depth progress monitoring.

b. Staffing support for high needs schools. While our goal is to have an effective educator in every classroom, some schools continue to struggle with identifying and securing top talent. We commit to providing these schools additional assistance. This includes year-round staffing support, more lucrative early hiring contracts, dedicated human resources staffing specialists to help fill vacancies with high quality candidates, and regular meetings with the principal to identify new school and programmatic needs.



Goal 2: Invest in our People



ca·pac·i·ty | kə'pasitē | *n.* **1:** the maximum amount that something can contain or produce. **2:** the ability or power to do, experience, or understand something.

Our students can only achieve at their highest levels when our teachers, leaders, and staff also excel in their work. We will consistently build the **capacity** of our people by encouraging them to serve as a community of learners and leaders, so that together we can all strengthen our skills and learn new ones. We commit to supporting our staff every step of the way, treating them as the respected professionals they are, and celebrating their remarkable accomplishments in educating our students.

Objectives

**Build & Support
Our Community
of Learners**

**Build & Support
Our Community
of Leaders**

**Value Our
Hardworking
People**

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



Introduction:

Our students can only achieve at their highest levels when our people also excel in their work. We are fortunate to have people within our organization who work tirelessly to do what is best for our students and we want to continuously support them by providing high quality and ample professional growth opportunities that allow them to strengthen their skills and to also learn new ones. We commit to supporting and encouraging our staff every step of the way and, as our hard work pays off and student outcomes increase, we will celebrate and recognize these accomplishments.

Objective 1: Build and Support Our Community of Learners

For our students to be effective learners, our staff must continue to be learners, too! While learning can be invigorating and exciting, it can also be uncomfortable and challenging. To help our employees embrace a “growth mindset⁵,” we will create and institutionalize organizational norms that celebrate curiosity, professional learning, appropriate risk-taking, and saying “I don’t know but I’ll find out.” To encourage everyone to learn, we will provide differentiated, relevant, timely, and engaging professional development opportunities for all of our people, both in the Central Office and at schools.

Initiatives:

1. *Support and build the instructional capacity of our educators*

The cornerstone of our work is to ensure that great teaching is happening in every classroom every day, in every school across our district.

a. Ensure access to high quality instructional supports. Teachers must have ready access to high quality resources (e.g. curriculum frameworks, content-specific materials) and knowledgeable people (e.g. teacher leaders, instructional coaches, lead teachers) in order to meet our ambitious instructional expectations. While each school will have the opportunity to determine the type and level of support needed to maximize instructional improvement, the rigorous standards and curriculum under which all schools operate will be constant. We have built a repository of resources, such as content area web pages that outline proven and promising instructional practices, and we will do a better job of publicizing these materials and inviting educators to utilize and help strengthen these resources. Furthermore, we will strive to provide our educators with more lead time when instructional materials are adopted or changed so they can better prepare and maximize the use of those resources.

b. Deepen and expand our educators’ content knowledge and pedagogical practice. Our educators must be deeply fluent in their content to provide effective instruction. Therefore, we will intensify and personalize content-specific professional development opportunities (both internal and external) to encourage our educators to continually strengthen their level of understanding. We will also provide our educators sufficient opportunities to practice these new instructional strategies and receive timely and constructive feedback.

⁵ According to Stanford University psychologist, Carol Dweck, a growth mindset is defined as one in which people believe that new intelligence, knowledge, and skills can be acquired through learning and resilience.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



2. Improve teaching quality through collaboration

We are fortunate to have tremendously talented educators in our classrooms and schools. However, we are simply more successful together than we are alone and our teachers are more effective at educating children when they benefit from collaboration with their colleagues. We will continue to embrace collaborative efforts such as TAP cluster meetings, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and cooperative professional development opportunities because they further develop the instructional capacity and effectiveness of our educators. To strengthen these efforts, however, we will clarify our expectations so their full value can be realized and our educators do not disproportionately focus on their processes. When we do this well, collaboration will be a powerful lever for continuous adult learning and instructional improvement in all of our schools.

3. Provide adequate individual planning time for all teachers

While we value collaborative planning, we also recognize the need for unstructured independent planning, thinking, and learning time. We respect our educators and value their professional judgment, which is why we will ensure that all teachers continue to have sufficient individual planning time.

4. Ensure that all staff members receive calibrated, timely, and meaningful performance feedback

If we ask our students to rise to the challenge, our staff must do the same and seek and appreciate performance feedback. We can only do better if we first know better, and then are given ample opportunities to practice. Performance feedback is a powerful tool for professional learning when it is high quality, timely, and meaningful. To ensure value and integrity to our district's performance management processes, we will:

- a. **Clearly articulate the expectations for all staff members.** Over the past five years, we have made significant strides in defining clear performance expectations for our employees, but this work must be deepened to include all staff. For our teachers, we have codified these expectations in our TEAM and TAP instructional rubrics. For our principals, we will continue to refine our principal competencies, which are aligned to the Administrator Evaluation Rubric and Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards, and for our central office staff members, we have identified six competencies to which we hold all central office administrators accountable⁶. Moreover, we have redesigned performance appraisal tools for instructional assistants, secretaries, and other classified staff such that they are competency-based for the specific role. We commit to continually communicating these expectations so all staff members can understand, internalize, and enact these expected competencies.



⁶ These six competencies are: high standards and professionalism, accountability and achieving results, collaboration and teamwork, human capital management, community engagement and partnerships, and infrastructure building.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



b. **Maximize effectiveness of evaluation systems** and ensure they are consistent, calibrated and developmental. We commit to continuously examine and refine the set of performance evaluation systems we have in place so they provide all staff members with timely and developmental feedback.

i. **Our Teachers:** First, we will ensure that our evaluation tools are high quality, holistic, and developmental; and second, we will create the necessary environment and professional development so that all of our educators understand them as such and not as strict compliance checklists. The 2014-15 school year will mark our district's fourth year of implementation with either TEAM or TAP. These tools have led to more effective instruction and increased student learning⁷. In the coming years, we will amplify our efforts at providing quality professional development of the evaluation rubric and its components so that it can be faithfully implemented in all of our schools.

We will also continue to encourage state officials to consider adjusting the existing teacher evaluation process to reflect different instructional contexts (i.e. early education, middle school art class, high school physics). This would more closely align the content knowledge and instructional expertise of observers with the teachers they are observing to maximize the developmental impact of the process. We also will strategically connect our evaluation systems to other elements of our district's instructional practices, such as PLCs or individual lesson planning. In short, we want all of our educators – observers and those being observed – to be fluent in identifying, recognizing, and implementing strong instructional practice.

ii. **Our Principals:** The Tennessee Department of Education will launch a revised evaluation rubric for principals in the 2014-15 school year. In alignment with this new tool, our district has developed the School Teams Achieve Results (STAR) plan, which charges principals, their instructional leadership teams, and their staffs to work collectively to improve student outcomes. This performance plan is aligned with the Principal Performance Contract and with the goals and objectives outlined in this strategic plan. This alignment is intentional, as we want all of our schools working towards our district's overarching vision. This purposeful coherence will bring greater clarity and focus regarding implementation of our strategic priorities and commitments.

iii. **Our Central Office Staff Members:** We have embedded six core competencies and additional role-specific competencies into our Central Office Performance Evaluation System. This performance management tool allows our central office staff to set professional goals, self-assess how they have done in meeting those goals, and have frank developmental performance-based conversations with their supervisors. In the next five years, however, we will refine this evaluation system so that it consistently provides high quality and meaningful feedback for professional growth.



⁷ 2014 Educational Return on Investment Report and analysis as part of Smarter School Spending initiative.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



c. **Implement formal feedback loops throughout all levels of our organization.** Our goal is to gather feedback beyond traditional supervisory and evaluative structures. We believe all feedback is valuable. This is particularly true when the feedback is critical or constructive as this is the only way we can improve. We will create additional feedback loops so our stakeholders can regularly offer their perspectives on a variety of issues. To ensure maximum effectiveness, these feedback loops will be continuously monitored and evaluated.

5. **Build capacity of our staff through high quality, tailored, and relevant professional development**

We encourage and expect all of our people to proactively seek learning opportunities to improve their performance. To reinforce our district's commitment to be a community of learners, we will provide everyone with high quality professional development opportunities. This expectation extends beyond our schools and into our Central Office, as we all have a professional responsibility to better ourselves, and, in turn, better student learning.

a. **Our School-Based Staff:** Our school-based staffs interact with students and families every day. Therefore, it is imperative to provide them support and professional growth opportunities that are differentiated based on their roles. We will continue to provide a menu of high quality professional learning opportunities that are aligned with the identified and articulated needs of our school-based staff. Our school-based staff, however, will also need to take initiative to seek – and possibly leverage their expertise to create – new professional development opportunities for themselves and their peers.

b. **Our Central Office Staff Members:** Every action we take in the Central Office has an effect on schools and student learning. Everyone in the Central Office, regardless of the specific department in which they work, has a responsibility to learn and adopt best practices. Over the next five years, we expect that every staff member will proactively seek opportunities for learning and improvement. To support their efforts, we will design professional development modules that are aligned to the Central Office Performance Evaluation system so all Central Office staff members will have access to high quality and relevant professional development.

6. **Create a regional school support structure**

We believe in the power of school leadership and will continue to support our principals in their quest to accelerate student learning. Our principals have asked for a regional school support structure that will simultaneously strengthen efforts at improving both teaching and learning within their buildings. By repositioning many teacher and student resources (i.e. instruction, special education, academic and behavioral interventions), as well as decision-making closer to the local school level, our school-based staff will be better positioned to effectively educate our children. Moreover, this structure will increase vertical alignment throughout our district as elementary, middle, and high schools would be served within the same support region.



GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



Objective 2: Build and Support Our Community of Leaders

Every adult in our school system can be – and should be – an educational leader. From principals and supervisors, to custodians and food service workers, to teachers and aides, we all have the ability to positively impact the educational life of our students. To build the capacity of our people to exercise leadership and make good decisions, we will actively facilitate their development and create more robust and specific career pathways for upward and lateral mobility. Thus, our staff members can leverage their strengths and follow their passions, while they continue to stretch their leadership by gaining new knowledge and skills.

Initiatives

1. Encourage staff to be educational leaders and creative problem-solvers

Our staff are knowledgeable practitioners who understand first-hand the challenges and realities of educating children well. We will encourage our people to use their expertise and creativity to improve our district and the learning opportunities we provide our students. Our district will consider piloting “Innovation Labs” to arm our staff with the necessary resources to design, prototype, and iterate their solutions to our district’s challenges. In the spirit of innovation, this concept could encompass physical labs (both in schools and across schools) or virtual collaboration. It is, however, not enough to develop new and great ideas; the knowledge must be stored, organized and made accessible to the rest of our staff as we build our collective knowledge base. We will design and implement complementary systems to do exactly that.

2. Develop and articulate robust career pathways

We see the need to creatively develop new and different roles within our organization that correspond to our priorities and to the talents of our workforce. To ensure that our staff members’ strengths and talents are matched with our greatest educational needs, while acknowledging that many of our most effective educators want to stay as close to the classroom as possible, we will define robust career pathways – including non-administrative instructional leadership roles – that leverage and maximize the abilities of our people. Some ways we might do this are to:

- a. **Differentiate school administrative roles** that support necessary non-instructional function such as facilities, discipline, and athletics. These quasi-administrative roles may be more cost effective positions than Assistant Principals and could allow school leaders to dedicate more time to instructional leadership.
- b. **Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of all positions** to ensure best fit. We want our people to be in the roles where their particular skills and talents are maximized. Therefore, we will work to make everyone aware of the roles that exist within our school system, from instructional coach to payroll clerk, and from technician to teacher. This way, all of our staff members, and those who aspire to join our district, can seek positions that best align with their abilities and maximizes our collective success.
- c. **Explore the possibility of creating new teacher pipeline programs** for hard-to-staff subject areas and/or schools. Having more viable pipelines for highly effective teachers in mathematics, special education, foreign language, and other high needs areas would greatly benefit our schools and students. This may require us to form strategic partnerships with outside agencies or schools of education to provide the highest quality professional development to those seeking a teaching license or an additional teaching credential.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



3. Develop mid-career leadership academies

We are proud many of our outstanding school leaders are “home grown” and understand our community and our local context. In our last strategic plan, we created an incredibly successful Leadership Academy (a partnership with the University of Tennessee), which has become a nationally acclaimed model for principal development. Now, we want to create a Leadership Academy for mid-career administrators who may want to acquire new knowledge and skills in a collaborative setting, learn the latest research, and become better equipped for success as a principal in the new reality of instructional leadership and accountability.

4. Articulate clear expectations for school principals

We ask much of our principals and need to ensure there is a shared language and understanding regarding the expectations we have of them. To do this, we must clearly articulate our expectations of the principalship (perhaps through mechanisms such as a Principals Handbook), which would clarify the knowledge and skills we expect of all principals, and delineate decisions that are made at the district-level versus those made at school sites. This information would also be shared with all stakeholders to ensure a shared understanding and a high level of transparency.

5. Clarify flexibility and autonomy for teachers and principals

In our conversations with teachers and administrators over the past year, we heard widely divergent perspectives on their perceived levels of autonomy. Some felt they had a great deal of flexibility in carrying out their classroom or school leadership responsibilities, while others perceived extremely limited autonomy. We will clearly communicate to all our employees the specific district mandates and requirements so they can maximize their judgment to make educational decisions that best meet the needs of their students.

6. Give more autonomy to effective teachers and principals

We want to foster innovation and creative thinking and leading in our district. For those teachers and principals who have a proven track record of success, we will explore the possibility of providing some formal and explicit autonomies and flexibility. This concept of “earned autonomy” would both recognize the terrific work of our most effective educators and leaders and also serve as opportunities to foster even greater innovation, as some of our best people will have broad latitude to explore new educational strategies and practices.



GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



Objective 3: Value our Hardworking People

Achieving excellence is neither easy nor convenient and it should be recognized when achieved. Our people have done - and continue to do - great work in improving student achievement and we will make a more concerted effort to consistently and sincerely appreciate, compensate, and reward them. Furthermore, we know that great people want to work alongside other great people, so we will honor the expertise and professionalism of our workforce by hiring only those who can contribute to our vision of Excellence for Every Child.

Initiatives:

1. Respect our educators as professionals

Our district is built on the talents, expertise, dedication, and passion of our educators. Our successes these past five years have been a direct consequence of their sense of possibility that all students can and deserve to learn, their relentless pursuit of excellent teaching, and their unwavering commitment to do what is best for students and student learning. We will value their efforts, treat them with the respect they deserve, enable and encourage them to appropriately exercise their professional judgment, and ensure their voices are heard and reflected in district decision-making.

2. Secure competitive wages for all staff

In developing this strategic plan, we clearly heard from our community that we must secure better compensation for our teachers and staff. We see this as one important way of valuing our people as professionals, showing our appreciation for their remarkable educational efforts, and investing in the retention and future recruitment of effective educators. Therefore, in the next five years, we will work to increase teacher compensation so by the year 2020, our average base salary for teachers is either in the top 20 of school districts in Tennessee (we currently rank 37th) or has been raised by 20 percent from its current level. We call this goal the 2020 Pay Plan. This translates into an annual average increase in Knox County Schools' staff salaries of at least 3-4% in each of the next five years. We know that we can only do this by calling upon the collective support of our entire community to encourage our elected officials to fully fund this important initiative.

In addition, we may also need to create a more rational salary structure for those positions beyond that of classroom teacher. The current compensation structures for principals, central office administrators, and non-administrative or classified staff are often confusing and inadequate. We will explore revamping our salary schedules so they are both competitive and easier to understand for current staff members and new applicants.

3. Redesign our strategic compensation program

In 2011-12, relying on teacher and community input, we launched a strategic compensation plan, APEX (Advance. Perform. EXcel), which distributed nearly eight million dollars in additional compensation to teachers based on great teaching, student results, instructional leadership and/or sustained work in high needs schools. We have heard from some stakeholders, however, that we need to revisit and redesign APEX to create a different strategic compensation structure. As a district that values innovation, professional risk-taking, and feedback we are excited by the opportunity to again work with our teachers and staff to create a new system that is transparent and equitable. We are confident the new strategic compensation structure will continue to reinforce the behaviors and outcomes that positively influence student learning and success.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE



4. Create a staff appreciation initiative

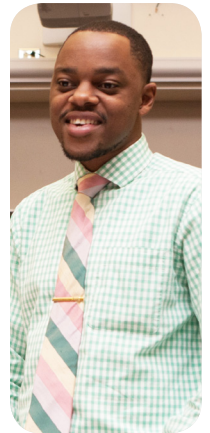
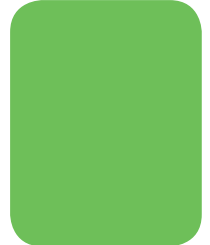
We are incredibly fortunate to have talented teachers, great leaders, and dedicated staff. We need not only to celebrate our successes and improve compensation, but also simply – and frequently – say “thank you” and “we appreciate you” to our extraordinary team of educators. We will launch a staff appreciation initiative, tentatively called “Keep the Great Going,” so our people know how much their hard work means to our school system and to our community.

5. Transform Human Resources into a talent management partner for schools

Our goal is to have an effective person in every job throughout our district. We will capitalize on the talents of our current staff members and ensure that all new staff members who join our district meet our standards of excellence. Our Human Resources staff will partner with principals, teachers, institutions of higher education, and others to attract and retain high quality, effective educators.

a. Explore a Strategic Staffing Initiative to accelerate improvement in our most challenging schools. Many of our high performing schools can easily attract top instructional talent, but some of our highest needs schools routinely struggle with teacher turnover and hard to staff positions. Given the richness and diversity of our school system, and the enormous talent pool from which we have to draw, we will explore the possibility of a strategic staffing initiative. One potential model may ask teams of highly skilled principals and teachers to work in targeted low-performing schools – with the help of additional resources and autonomies – to effectuate significant improvements in student learning over a three-year period. Such a model would place the responsibility for designing and implementing an improvement plan in the hands of school leaders and recognize the power of professional collaboration, stable and trusting relationships, and time.

b. Help principals identify a high quality applicant pool. We heard, from our district’s leaders, particularly our principals, that it can sometimes be overwhelming to identify the best candidate from the large numbers of individuals that often apply for instructional positions. This is why it may make sense to expand the role of our Human Resources (HR) Office in recruiting and identifying high quality candidates as a service to our school principals. Our school leaders would still retain the authority to make the hiring decision, either from within the pool of candidates identified by HR, or from outside of it. We would charge our Human Resources department to create a well-coordinated and high-energy recruiting program using traditional means (e.g. job postings, career fairs) and non-traditional means (e.g. social media, webinars) to attract a robust pool of potential new staff to our district. Furthermore, they will design and implement a rigorous process to identify the strongest candidates. This portfolio of high quality candidates would then be offered to principals for their consideration. This process would support our principals by providing them direct access to a high quality applicant pool without principals necessarily having to spend hours of their valuable time recruiting and preliminarily screening candidates.



Goal 3: Partner with Our Stakeholders



team | tēm | *n.* two or more people working together. *v.* come together as a team to achieve a common goal.

We believe that our district is more capable of preparing our students for a bright future when we benefit from the talents, resources, and support of our broader community and all the stakeholders within it. We will more closely collaborate with all our partners to form “One Big **Team**” working for our students, inviting and earning stakeholder feedback so we can continue to know more and do better and elevate our commitment to customer service and professionalism.

Objectives

**Build &
Strengthen Our
“One Big Team”**

**Invite & Earn
Stakeholder
Feedback**

**Improve
Customer
Service &
Communication**

GOAL 3: PARTNER WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS



Introduction:

We believe that our district is better positioned and more capable of achieving our ambitious goals when we leverage the talents, resources, and support of our broader community and all the stakeholders within it. We want our stakeholders - parents, students, staff, and community members - to feel invited, welcomed, and engaged in our district's work. To achieve these ends, we will need to act in three specific ways. First, we must build trusting relationships with all stakeholders by always speaking honestly and interacting respectfully. Second, we will need to be transparent with our thinking so our stakeholders can regularly know the "why," the "what," the "how," behind our work, and feel invited to join our efforts. And third, we will need to thoughtfully design, develop, and implement the conditions and structures that maximize meaningful and sustainable stakeholder engagement. Our students depend on us to be knowledgeable participants who work together in a coordinated manner so they can reach their highest potential.

Objective 1: Build and strengthen our "One Big Team"

In our community, we are fortunate that there are many individuals, nonprofits, institutions, and community organizations that share our commitment to serving our young people and their families. Collectively, they possess deep and long-standing ties to all parts of our community and have forged close and trusting relationships with diverse groups of stakeholders. In the next five years, we will better collaborate with our partners to harness our collective resources and talents to better student outcomes. Together, we can and must work as "one big team" on behalf of our children.

Initiatives:

1. *Develop a community relations function*

Partnerships require diligent care and effort and need to be thoughtfully cultivated and maintained. To prioritize collaboration with our community stakeholders, we will create a community relations function to help design and implement a district partnership, advocacy and engagement strategy. Part of this work will be assessing and managing the status of our current partnerships, forging new relationships with organizations and individuals, and working with schools to determine how partners and stakeholders could best bolster their educational work.

2. *Share our district's exciting work with all stakeholders*

With ninety schools, our district –on any given day – is taking bold and creative steps in educating our students. We are proud of our progress and want to share our work with those in our community by opening our "schoolhouse doors" and inviting stakeholders to learn more about our organization's vision, mission, and strategic priorities. This means we will:

- a. **Educate our community about the power and purpose of the high academic standards** we hold for all students. Our district has been a leader at the regional, state, and national level due to our relentless pursuit of rigorous academic excellence. We have coupled our embrace of Tennessee's rigorous Common Core State Standards with substantial professional development for our educators, and improved student outcomes have resulted. We heartily support these higher academic standards as they ask our students to deepen their conceptual knowledge and to think and work in ways that are more authentically aligned for a successful high school graduation and post-secondary readiness. Our endorsement is not sufficient and we will need to better communicate to all our stakeholders, in a variety of ways, the power and purpose of these more rigorous standards.

GOAL 3: PARTNER WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS



b. Invite our community to more district-wide activities. It is often more powerful and illuminating to “show” rather than “tell,” which is why we will develop new ways for our stakeholders to assume a front row seat to our district’s exciting work. First, we will build upon our current engagement initiatives (e.g. Principal for a Day) and maximize their reach and impact. Second, we will also explore developing and piloting new engagement opportunities so stakeholders have options from which to choose.

Objective 2: Invite and Earn Stakeholder Feedback

To maximize the positive impact of our stakeholders on our educational work, we will need to invite their feedback by providing multiple opportunities for them to share their perspectives, and for us to earn their trust. Our stakeholders must know their feedback is wanted and valued, and critical to informing district decisions. Furthermore, we must resist the temptation to only solicit feedback from those who hold similar viewpoints and challenge ourselves to consistently seek out diverse perspectives and opinions.

Initiatives:

1. Develop and promote differentiated stakeholder engagement opportunities

Our stakeholders, like our students, are unique with different needs and levels of understanding. In order to be an inclusive organization that values, seeks, and uses stakeholder voice, we will strategically employ a variety of engagement opportunities so people can choose how they want to participate. This means strengthening our traditional engagement mechanisms (e.g. community meetings, Teacher Talks, feeder group meetings), and experimenting with new engagement formats and experiences. By building stakeholder engagement opportunities that allow us to listen to, learn from, and understand one another, we will more easily build trusting relationships within and outside of our organization.

2. Employ advisory groups to inform district decisions

We make better decisions when we hear diverse opinions and will encourage our staff – both at schools and in the central office – to assemble informal and/or formal advisory groups. This will not only strengthen our district’s ability to make thoughtful and strategic decisions, but will also help us develop a cadre of district ambassadors that can disseminate information throughout our community. We will formalize the district’s Teacher Advisory Committee⁸, create additional advisory groups for functions within the organization where there is a need but no advisory group currently exists, and encourage all schools that do not currently have such a structure to develop one.

3. Create systems to track and address feedback from stakeholders

We need to make sure that the feedback we receive is valued, responded to, and internalized. Therefore, we will explore creating systems to ensure that every comment, compliment, and concern we receive gets to the appropriate people within our organization, and gets a timely and professional response. Such potential systems should also allow us to synthesize what we have heard so that themes and trends in the feedback can help us do our work more effectively.

⁸ Launched in December 2013 with roughly twenty educators throughout the district

GOAL 3: PARTNER WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS



Objective 3: Improve Customer Service and Communication

We are a large organization with many moving parts and often times it can be difficult for our community – including our staff members – to understand the various initiatives that are unfolding within each of our schools. Therefore, we will enhance the quality and frequency of information provided to our stakeholders. This will ensure everyone is updated on what is happening at their neighborhood schools and they will also receive a “bigger picture” perspective of the district’s policies and priorities. We will do this with the highest levels of professionalism and customer service so every stakeholder feels valued and respected.

Initiatives:

1. Uphold high levels of professionalism and customer service

As a school district we proudly serve our students, families, staff, and community members and our best efforts must include the highest levels of professionalism and customer service. We highly value the “stakeholder experience” and want every interaction someone has with our organization – whether it is walking into one of our schools or calling Central Office – to be positive and beneficial. We must do better in this area. Over the next five years, we commit to designing and implementing a district-wide customer service strategy that trains and empowers every staff member to confidently, pleasantly, and accurately respond to stakeholder questions and concerns.

2. Diversify and streamline external communication channels

In addition to fostering collaborative dialogue with our stakeholders by providing differentiated engagement opportunities, we also recognize there are situations in which information needs to be quickly and accurately relayed in a format that is accessible and easily digestible. For this purpose, we will develop a diverse menu of communication options so our stakeholders can decide how they prefer to receive information regarding our district’s work. This will include developing an easy-to-navigate website that is clear, approachable, and interactive, more proactively providing regular updates on work through print and visual media, and building an active social media presence.



GOAL 3: PARTNER WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS



3. Explore the use of a Parent Resource Center

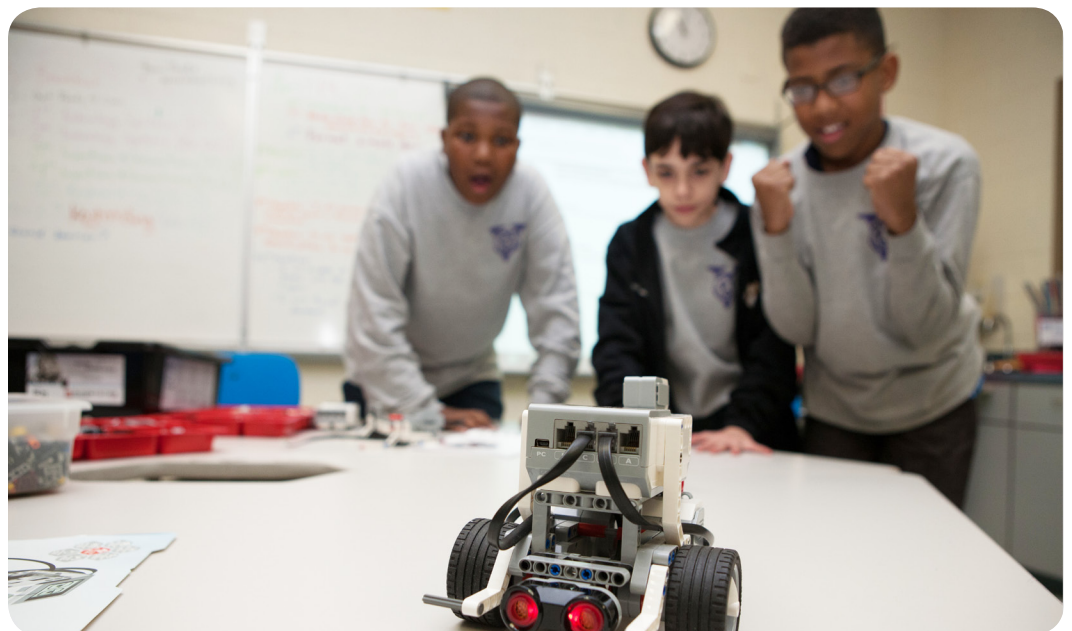
Our parents are our most critical partners in achieving our goals and we need to consistently invite and encourage their engagement. To create this close partnership, we will explore the possibility of creating a district-wide Parent Resource Center to serve as a “one stop shop” for parents. This Center would be accessible, both in terms of location and house of operation, to parents and families and play several roles. These roles would include providing information on a variety of issues (e.g. transfers, vaccinations, student support services), delivering additional services such as translators, connecting parents to other government and/or local agencies, and providing relevant workshops and trainings.

4. Strengthen internal communications

We have a staff of approximately 8,000 people who are committed to bettering the lives and learning of our students. Like many other large organizations, we are most effective when everyone is appropriately informed about our district’s current work and future priorities. Therefore, we will create an internal communications strategy that ensures all staff receive timely and accurate information to do their important jobs well and create a culture where we all “speak with one voice.” Similar to our approach with our external stakeholders, we will deliberately create feedback loops so that communication continues to be two-way.

5. Develop and disseminate messaging toolkits for schools

Many of our stakeholders regularly interact with our schools and approach our school-based staff with their questions and concerns. To better support our school-based staff in confidently and accurately relaying information, we will develop and disseminate toolkits, both in paper and electronic formats, to provide tactical resources on a variety of common topics (e.g. Common Core State Standards, PARCC testing, CTE programming). Our hope is that by providing our staff easy access to high quality information, they will build their capacity as knowledgeable communicators and ensure everyone in our organization is aligned around unified, timely, and accurate messages.



Our Future: Culture of Excellence



ex·cel·lence | 'eksələns | n. the quality of being outstanding or extremely good.

We are proud of the progress our students have made, but recognize that if we are to achieve our ambitious goals, we must collectively create a pervasive 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. Only then will every child have the opportunity to successfully reach their highest potential, regardless of whatever challenging circumstances they may face.

Objectives

**Every School is
a Great School**

**Every Student
is Nurtured &
Academically
Successful**

**Every Staff
Member is a
Steward of
Excellence**

**Every
Stakeholder
is Invested &
Productively
Engaged**

OUR FUTURE: A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE



What is a Culture of Excellence?

We believe that our strategy, as defined by our three goal areas (Focus on Every Student, Invest in Our People, and Partner with Our Stakeholders), will help us create a Culture of Excellence that will ultimately lead to us meeting our ambitious vision of Excellence for Every Child.

To us, a Culture of Excellence is exemplified by:

- **Every school is a great school:** A system of great schools where any student, family, or community member would be excited about, and proud of, the quality of education offered in each of our schools.
- **Every student is nurtured and academically successful:** Every student believing he or she is smart, cared for, belongs, and, above all else, learning at high levels. That, on any given day, our students have numerous adults and role models to turn to, and they have the opportunity and support necessary to succeed.
- **Every staff member is a steward of excellence:** Every person within our district will understand and embody our Commitments to Our Community and feel empowered to do so. We must all whole-heartedly embrace our collective responsibility to do what is best for students.
- **Every stakeholder is invested and productively engaged:** Every stakeholder will feel they are a valued and contributing member of our district's work and have a responsibility to not only their neighborhood school but also to the success of the district as a whole. Every stakeholder will believe that our most important work is to meet the needs of every student in every school... one student at a time.



OUR FUTURE: A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE



Why is this important?

We are proud of the strong progress our district has made in the past five years. In order to realize *Excellence for Every Child*, we must build upon that momentum; this will require the collective commitment of all our stakeholders to create and embrace a Culture of Excellence. We fundamentally believe that our school system's success will significantly impact the future vitality of our community. We are not satisfied with pockets of excellence or a subset of great schools; we aspire to be an entire school system marked by excellence. We desire a district where every child has the opportunity to successfully reach his or her highest potential, regardless of which school they attend or whatever challenging circumstances they may face. To achieve this, we will call upon the collective talents, passions, and persistence of our community to help elevate our district's performance. We must boldly accept this challenge together as it is only through this fierce and committed collaboration – as one big team – that we will be effective in making success contagious and sustained, thereby creating our Culture of Excellence.

How will we know we have accomplished this?

We believe that only by first creating a Culture of Excellence will we reach our ultimate goal of *Excellence for Every Child*. To know we have achieved this level of district-wide improvement, we have identified four key indicators:

- Earn a **Level 5 composite in student growth** each year
- **Double** the number of Reward Schools
- **At least 70% of our students** will meet our College and Career Readiness Indicator⁹
- **Cut in half** all achievement gaps¹⁰

We realize that systemic improvement does not happen overnight. Our district, however, has made strong and steady progress these past five years and we are on the cusp on achieving something truly spectacular for our youth and our community. As we look forward to these next five years, we are committed to accelerating our success, creating a Culture of Excellence, providing a truly outstanding education to our students, and realizing our vision of *Excellence for Every Child*. **We invite you to join us!**



⁹ Calculated by the percentage of incoming freshmen who graduate four years later with an ACT score of at least 21

¹⁰ Includes the four groups of students for all Goal 1 performance targets

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Goal 1: Focus on Every Student	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2025
At least 75% of our kindergarteners will be ready for first grade based on our First Grade Readiness Indicator	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	85%
At least 75% of our 3rd graders will be proficient or advanced in reading	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	85%
At least 75% of our students in grades 3-8 will be proficient or advanced in reading/ELA and math	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	85%
At least 80% of our high school students will be proficient or advanced in numeracy (Algebra I/II)	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%
At least 90% of our high school students will be proficient or advanced in literacy (English I/II)	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%
At least 90% of students will successfully complete "Diploma Plus Two"	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%
Goal 2: Invest in Our People	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2025
At least 95% of teachers, administrators, and all staff will meet or exceed expectations	91%	92%	93%	94%	95%	95%
Double the number of schools that have an overall Level 5 TVAAS growth composite	36	42	48	54	60	60
Retain at least 90% of our highest performing staff each year						
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						
Goal 3: Partner with Our Stakeholders	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2025
At least 90% of students and families find they benefit from their school's educational experiences	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
At least 90% of our school-based staff will consider their school a good place to work and learn	80%	82%	85%	87%	90%	90%
Double the number of meaningful partnerships						
Our Future: A Culture of Excellence	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2025
Our district will earn a Level 5 composite in growth each year						
Double the number of Tennessee Reward schools	6	7	8	9	10	10
At least 70% of our students will meet our College and Career Readiness Indicator ¹¹	42%	52%	58%	64%	70%	80%
Cut in half all achievement gaps ¹²						

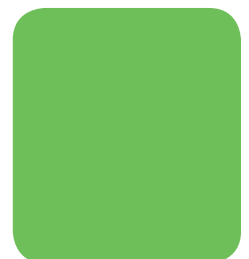
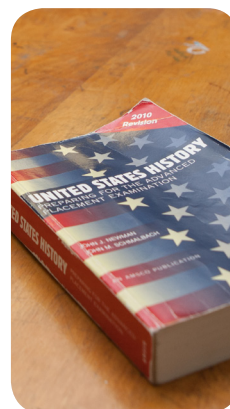
¹¹ Calculated by the percentage of incoming freshmen who graduate four years later with an ACT score of at least 21

¹² Include the English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, Economically Disadvantaged, and Black/Hispanic/Native American student subgroups for all Goal 1 academic performance targets

APPENDIX I: HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009-2014 STRATEGIC PLAN

EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN

- In August 2011, we opened the L&N STEM Academy, one of the first Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) high schools in the state, in partnership with the City of Knoxville and Knox County and used private funding to support a 1:1 technology initiative for its students. This technology-rich environment allowed for problem-based learning to serve as the centerpiece of its instructional program. The school's early success was evident when it was awarded a competitive grant to serve as the regional STEM hub for east Tennessee and was recognized as a Tennessee Reward School based on academic achievement in the top 5% of high schools in the state.
- We also worked in partnership with Pellissippi State Community College and the Knoxville Chamber to develop the Career Magnet Academy at Pellissippi State, a career academy/early college magnet high school housed on the community college's campus. It will open in fall 2014 and offer rigorous college and career pathways for students within four themed academies.
- As part of our strategy to cultivate innovative instructional programs, to ensure high quality, rigorous curriculum and instruction that leads to academic success, and to reduce minority and economic isolation, we have expanded magnet school options to include an International Baccalaureate program at West High School and the School of Communications at Fulton High School.
- Recognizing that traditional school settings may not adequately serve all students, our district has continued to seek multiple and varied pathways to graduation. The Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy opened in 2010-11 to provide a safe, nurturing environment for high school students across Knox County grow both socially and academically through individualized educational programs, career initiatives and community partnerships. Since its inception, the Kelley Volunteer Academy has successfully graduated 553 students who may not have otherwise graduated in a traditional classroom setting.
- In our middle schools, we developed the Summer Bridge Program as an intensive, eight-week instructional period for eighth grade students who had not exhibited mastery of essential skills needed for success in high school. Our most effective teachers teach these courses and, as a result, our students have been overwhelmingly successful. In the third year of this initiative (Summer 2013), 92% of participating students were successful in Summer Bridge and were promoted to high school.



APPENDIX I: HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009-2014 STRATEGIC PLAN

EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN

- We launched a comprehensive honors initiative during the 2012-13 school year in all four core content areas (i.e. language arts, math, science, and social studies). This increased the number of students in middle school honors math by 18%, while also improving the percent of those honors students who were proficient or advanced on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) from 94.5% to 97.8%. We also increased the number of middle school students earning high school Algebra I credit by 22%, with more than 99% of those students scoring proficient or advanced on the state End of Course (EOC) assessment. Similarly, we increased the enrollment of middle school students earning high school physical science credits by 77% with a success rate of 99.5%.
- In elementary school, with the support of the Board of Education and Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett, we launched an early literacy initiative in five of our high poverty schools funded by the Great Schools Partnership (GSP). The initiative employs highly skilled literacy coaches to work primarily with first grade teachers and students to develop proficient readers. In 2012-13, this initiative was expanded to 10 additional high poverty schools through funding from the United Way of Greater Knoxville and an additional appropriation from the Knox County Commission.
- In addition to the early literacy coaches, the KCS implemented a Birth to Kindergarten Initiative to provide support to parents of at-risk children in facilitating foundational skills for school-readiness and connecting with other service providers to meet family needs. As the “first teachers” of their children, parents are vital partners in closing opportunity gaps. The Birth to Kindergarten Initiative, which has now been renamed as Parents as Teachers, is also funded by the GSP.
- We have also aggressively sought to develop our district’s talent initiatives and build the capacity of our workforce. First, we transitioned to the new Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) annual evaluation model, which earned recognition from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) for its fidelity of implementation. Second, we applied for and won \$25 million of competitive grant funding for a Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant, in partnership with the National Institute on Excellence in Teaching (NIET), which expanded Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) from four to 18 schools. NIET recognized us as a TAP District of Distinction at the March 2013 annual conference based on our success in implementing the TAP system effectively. And third, we were awarded an additional \$4.7 million from the state Innovation Acceleration Fund (IAF) Grant to implement strategic compensation plans. The strategic compensation system, APEX (Advance. Perform. EXcel.), which was designed with significant teacher input, includes a unique individual scorecard that rewards teachers based on effective instruction and student academic outcomes (TEAM), teacher leadership, and stable, effective instruction in a high need school.

APPENDIX II: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR LARGE-SCALE INITIATIVES

Initiatives	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Goal 1 Focus on Every Student Balanced Calendar - a modified school calendar that reduces the long summer break and reallocates these days throughout the school year to produce more frequent breaks, called intersessions. Intersessions can be structured various ways, ranging from pure vacation to providing academic programming (both intervention and enrichment opportunities).	EXPLORE	DESIGN	IMPLEMENT		
High School Schedule - to maximize the amount of time students spend on core instruction, we will investigate modifying the traditional block schedule.	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			
Technology-Enabled Personalized Learning - a full-scale district-wide implementation of personalized learning supported by technology for all students. In grades 4-12, this would be a 1:1 deployment of technology and in lower grades, we would use a “blended learning” model.	This will be a phased approach over the next five years with incremental implementation contingent on available funding				
Intervention Delivery Model - to ensure that our students are receiving high-quality and appropriate interventions uniquely tailored to their specific needs, we may need to redesign our current intervention delivery model. This redesign would likely consider different staffing models, the use of technology, and different intervention programs.		EXPLORE	DESIGN	IMPLEMENT	

APPENDIX II: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR LARGE-SCALE INITIATIVES

Initiatives	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Regional School Support Structure - a supervisory reorganization that repositions many support services closer to the local school level to better serve our principals. It would promote timelier and deeper levels of support and increase vertical alignment as elementary, middle, and high schools would be served within the same support region.	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			
Secure Competitive Wages for All Staff - increase teacher compensation so that by the year 2020, our average base salary for teachers is either in the top 20 school districts in Tennessee (we currently rank 37 th) or has been raised by 20 percent from its current level. We call this goal the 2020 Pay Plan; this translates into an annual average increase in staff salaries of at least 3-4%.	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			
Mid-Career Leadership Academies - create a mid-career Leadership Academy for our sitting principals to sharpen their skills, learn the latest research, and become better equipped for success as a principal in the new reality of instructional leadership and accountability.	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			
Strategic Compensation Program - redesign and redeploy a new strategic compensation program that continues to reinforce the behaviors and outcomes and positively influence student learning and success	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			
Human Resources Redesign - two initiatives: 1) explore the possibility of implementing a Strategic Staffing Initiative to accelerate improvements in our most challenging schools and 2) examine the benefits of consolidating a recruitment and screening of all new staff members to ensure consistently high-quality candidates.	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			

Goal 2
Invest in Our People

APPENDIX II: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR LARGE-SCALE INITIATIVES

Goal 3 Partner with Our Stakeholders	Initiatives	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
	Parent Resource Center - a physical space that would provide information on a variety of issues, deliver additional support services (e.g. translators), facilitate connections to other government agencies, and provide useful training and workshops		EXPLORE	DESIGN	IMPLEMENT	
	Community Relations Function - create a new role within the central office that focuses on designing and implementing a district partnership, advocacy and engagement strategy so that we can effectively recruit and develop our “One Big Team”	EXPLORE DESIGN	IMPLEMENT			

APPENDIX III: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

We are pleased with the hearty stakeholder engagement that characterized the development of the five-year strategic plan, *Deepening Our Work: Excellence for Every Child*.

From September - December 2013

Public Opportunities:

- 70 one-on-one interviews with elected officials, KCS senior staff, and community leaders
- 8 Insight Sessions; 800+ people
- 2 Feedback Sessions; 100+ people
- 20 Chatterboxes; 700+ people
- Surveys; 5000+ people

Board of Education:

- 11/1: Board retreat
- 11/18: Mid-month meeting

Steering Committee:

- 9/12; 10/14; 11/14; 12/2

KCS Leadership Team:

- 9/4; 9/11; 9/12; 12/6; 12/13; 12/18; 12/20

Other Constituencies:

- 11/19: District Advisory Council Meeting

From January - July 2014

Public Opportunities:

- 2/11: State of the Schools address
- 4/15: Strategic plan mini-movies with survey for all four goals
- 4/29: Virtual Town-Hall; 40 people
- 5/8: In-person Town Hall; 60 people
- 6/30 - 8/4: Feedback channels (i.e. website, email, surveys) open for stakeholder comment to first strategic plan draft

Board of Education:

- 3/10; 5/27; 6/30; 7/2

Steering Committee:

- 2/3; 3/10; 4/25

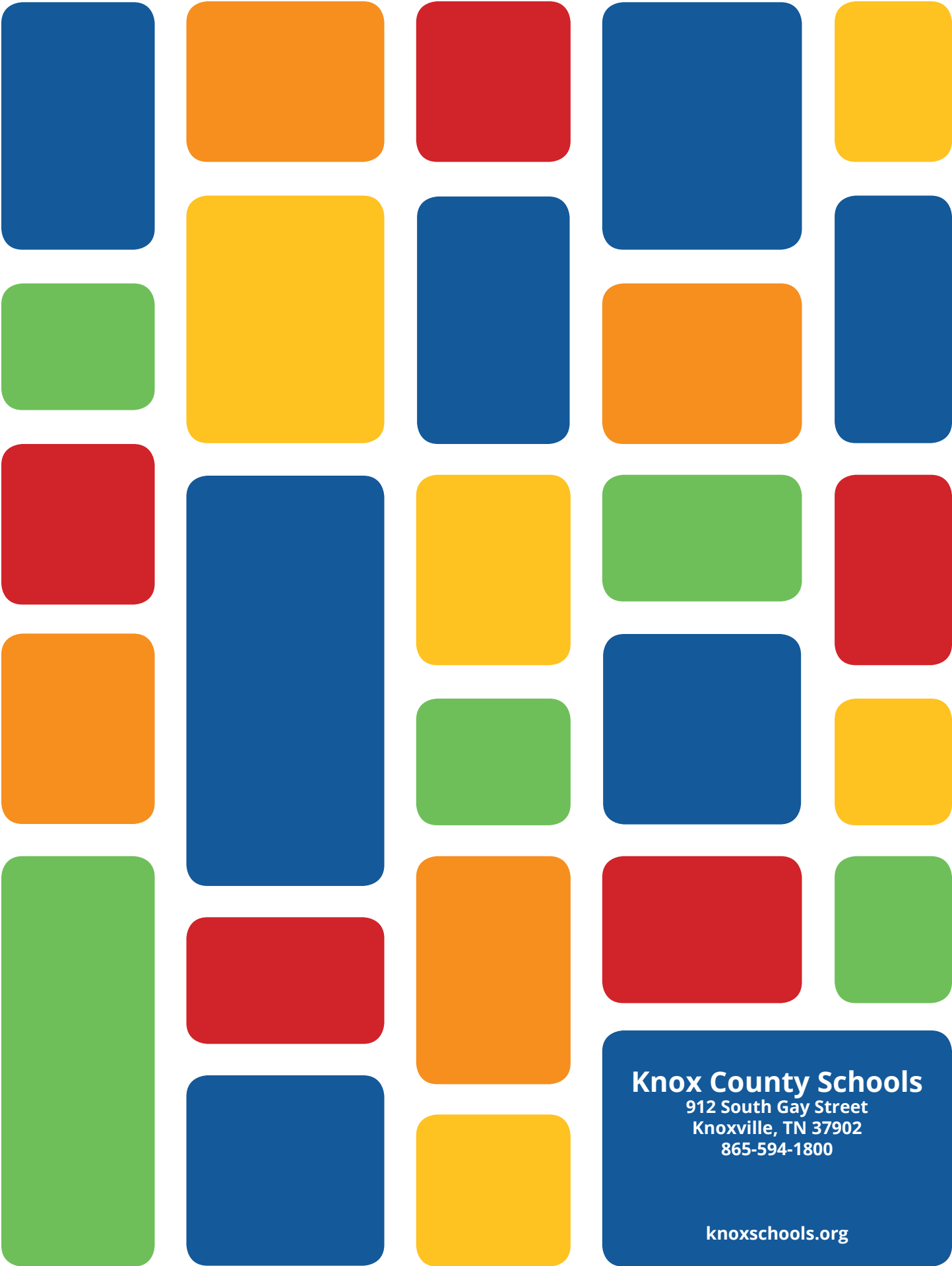
KCS Leadership Team:

- 4/9; 4/23

Other Constituencies:

- Strategic Plan Principal Task Force - group of 20 principals who reviewed and helped shape each goal area (met four times in April)
- Teacher Advisory Committee; 4/10
- K-12 Principals Meeting; 3/13; 5/29
- Teacher Advisory Committee and Principal Task Force - solicited feedback on first draft of strategic plan, 7/22





Knox County Schools

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