

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2024



# Knox County Schools at a Glance

## 2020-2021



**61,526**  
STUDENTS



MORE THAN  
**120**  
LANGUAGES/DIALECTS

Including:  
7.9% Spanish  
0.6% Arabic/Egyptian/Lebane  
0.5% Chinese  
0.4% Mayan  
0.3% Swahili/Kiswahili  
0.3% Kirundi



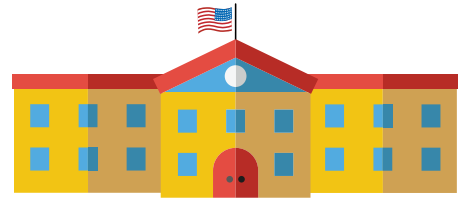
**9**  
DISTRICTS

Each district elects one representative to the Board of Education, which governs the overall school system



**340**  
BUSES

Run each school year, traveling over 3.5 million miles a year



**88**  
SCHOOLS

Led by more than 8,000 employees, including over 5,000 teachers



- 3% Asian
- 16.9% Black/African American
- 10.8% Hispanic/Latino
- 0.4% Native American/Alaska Native
- 0.3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 68.7% White



**\$503,847,000**  
ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET



**22,000**  
MEALS SERVED DAILY

Of those meals, 74% are free/reduced

On behalf of the Board of Education and Knox County Schools, I am pleased to present this new five-year strategic plan.

This plan represents priorities our community helped identify as necessary for our school system to continuously improve and provide our students the best education possible.

It is a living document that will drive future decisions and serve as the roadmap to success for all students. Included in the plan are clear benchmarks and identifiable ways to measure progress. We thank everyone who participated in the process. It is evident public education is a priority in Knox County and for that we are grateful.

While there is much to be proud of in our schools, there is work yet to be done. With these goals and expectations, we are positioned to raise the level of achievement for all students. We want to educate and graduate your children – our future – by providing them every opportunity to reach their fullest potential. But we can't do this alone.

The success of our students depends heavily on the support and involvement of our families and community. I hope you will share in this journey alongside us as we move forward and upward.

I assure you we will maintain an open line of communication and provide avenues for engagement as we dedicate ourselves to this shared vision for Knox County Schools.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Superintendent  
Knox County Schools





# INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Knox County Schools is committed to providing every student with a high-quality education. Our professional educators promote student growth and academic success in a way that prepares students to thrive in a flourishing community. Our goal of continuous improvement in reading and math proficiency will propel students toward their desired postsecondary path.

## OBJECTIVES

Reading  
Proficiency

Math  
Proficiency

Ready  
Graduates

### Reading Proficiency

- Provide dedicated and qualified instructional reading support for elementary schools
- Continue training pre-K and elementary teachers with effective strategies for how to diagnose barriers to reading

### Math Proficiency

- Design and use, with intention, real-world projects and programs that are engaging and relevant, to increase intrinsic motivation for students to progress

### Ready Graduates

- Create and implement a plan for all high schools to increase composite ACT scores
- Align career and technical course offerings to ensure progress toward industry certification
- Develop school-level plans to increase the number of students completing Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge International, dual enrollment and/or technical/career courses prior to graduation
- Educate students and families on how to navigate all aspects of college and career entry

# INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

	Objective	SY17-18 Baseline	SY18-19 Goal	SY19-20 Goal	SY20-21 Goal	SY21-22 Goal	SY22-23 Goal	SY23-24 Goal
<b>Reading Proficiency</b>	Grade 3 Literacy Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	39.0%	42.8%	46.4%	49.7%	52.9%	55.8%	58.6%
	Grades 3-5 Literacy Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	41.0%	44.7%	48.1%	51.4%	54.4%	57.3%	59.9%
	Grades 6-8 Literacy Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	35.9%	39.9%	43.7%	47.2%	50.5%	53.6%	56.5%
	Grades 9-12 Literacy Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	38.7%	42.5%	46.1%	49.5%	52.6%	55.6%	58.3%
<b>Math Proficiency</b>	Grade 3-5 Mathematics Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	41.5%	45.2%	48.6%	51.8%	54.8%	57.6%	60.3%
	Grade 6-8 Mathematics Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	38.6%	42.4%	46.0%	49.4%	52.6%	55.5%	58.3%
	Grade 9-12 Mathematics Percent On Grade Level or Mastered	30.5%	34.8%	38.9%	42.7%	46.3%	49.7%	52.8%
<b>Ready Graduates</b>	ACT Composite Mean for Graduates	21.4	21.6	21.8	22	22.2	22.4	22.6
	Percentage of regular, on-time Graduates	89.6%	90.3%	90.9%	91.4%	92.0%	92.5%	92.9%
	*Percentage of Graduates deemed Ready Graduates	55.2%	58.0%	60.6%	63.1%	65.4%	67.6%	69.6%

\* The 2018-2019 Ready Graduate criteria include the following four measures for graduates from the class of 2018.

To be considered ready graduates, students must meet at least one of the following:

- Score of 21 or higher on ACT (or 1060 or higher on the SAT); or
- Complete four early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs); or
- Complete two EPSOs and earn an industry certification; or
- Complete two EPSOs and earn a score of military readiness on ASVAB AFQT.



## ELIMINATING DISPARITIES

Knox County Schools is working to eliminate disparities in both academic achievement and discipline and to provide access to learning opportunities that reflect a rich diversity in a culturally sensitive manner. The district will continue to place priority on preparing our students to interact in our increasingly diverse society. We will focus on whole-child development through education in the arts, physical activity, wellness, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and world languages.

### OBJECTIVES



#### **Provide Student Supports**

- Develop a well-executed principal preparedness program to train effective, visionary administrators
- Equip educators and align resources, tools and training to be culturally responsive, build positive relationships, and reflect the diverse needs of ALL students
- Provide training for all staff in Adverse Childhood Experiences, monitor progress and refine best practices of behavior support systems to address specific school needs. (Behavior support systems may include, but are not limited to, ACEs, PBIS, Restorative Practices and Cultural Competency)
- Seek and advocate funding for additional mental health professionals
- Engage our whole school community to educate and respond to bullying based on research and evidence-based practice, effective pedagogy and strong partnerships

#### **Narrow Achievement Gap**

- Use multiple strategies to recruit and retain experienced educators at high-needs schools
- Maintain commitment to provide effective class sizes for instructional, academic and behavioral support
- Continue to invest in the professional growth and support of all educators by offering training and learning opportunities tailored to meet individual needs

#### **Improve Student Access**

- Develop strategies to ensure student access to advanced academic programs and Career & Technical Education courses
- Continue to review, evaluate and strengthen special education services for students with disabilities
- Maintain and reinforce the KCS commitment to arts education

# ELIMINATING DISPARITIES

	Objective	SY17-18 Baseline	SY18-19 Goal	SY19-20 Goal	SY20-21 Goal	SY21-22 Goal	SY22-23 Goal	SY23-24 Goal
<b>Provide Student Supports</b>	Partnerships and outreach efforts with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)	—	3.0	6.0	8.0	9.0	10.0	11.0
	Percentage of certified staff of color	4.7%	7.2%	9.9%	12.4%	15.0%	17.6%	20.2%
	Percentage of school social workers, counselors and psychologists with Adverse Childhood Experiences training	—	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Percentage of KCS sites including central office that have completed Cultural Competency training	12.5%	95.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Percentage of schools that have received Tier 2 PBIS training	58.7%	69.0%	79.3%	89.6%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Narrow Achievement Gaps</b>	Success rate in all tested subjects for students in the Black/Hispanic/Native American student groups	18.1%	23.2%	28.0%	32.5%	36.7%	40.7%	44.4%
	Success rate in all tested subjects for students in the Students with Disabilities student group	9.5%	15.2%	20.5%	25.4%	30.1%	34.5%	38.6%
	Success rate in all tested subjects for students in the Economically Disadvantaged student group	17.1%	22.3%	27.1%	31.7%	36.0%	40.0%	43.7%
	Percentage of Black/Hispanic/Native American/Students who have at least one Out-of-School suspension	11.4%	10.0%	8.5%	7.1%	5.6%	4.2%	3.0%
<b>Improve Student Access</b>	Percentage of students with disabilities who spend at least 80% of their school day in a regular education setting	64.5%	66.3%	68.0%	69.8%	71.5%	73.3%	75.0%
	Percentage of Graduates who participated in at least one advanced academic course (AP/IB/Cambridge/Dual Enrollment) or national industry certification	50.25%	53.4%	56.3%	59.0%	61.6%	64.2%	66.8%



## CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE

Knox County Schools seeks to create a culture of open communication among students, faculty and staff and to promote transparent, two-way dialogue with stakeholders. The district will continue to build a team of outstanding teachers and administrators and to compensate them at a level that reflects our high standards. We will also emphasize fiscal responsibility by ensuring strong management and oversight systems.

### OBJECTIVES



#### **Exceptional Place to Work and Learn**

- Improve regional standing for teacher compensation with competitive salaries and benefits
- Improve support personnel compensation (i.e. educational assistant, security, maintenance, custodial, food service and secretarial positions)
- Create a Minority Educators Advisory Council to address and enhance staff diversity
- Continue to evaluate and improve working and learning conditions

#### **Effective Communication**

- Develop district-wide communication plan focused on increasing engagement with staff and families
- Engage community voice and stakeholder advisory groups to gather input and recommendations for district improvements
- Provide annual report and ongoing updates on strategic plan initiatives

#### **Strong Fiscal Management**

- Clarify and strengthen financial procedures and practices at district/school levels to reduce audit findings
- Ensure transparency in the program evaluation and budget process
- Continue to implement best practices in managing capital assets and transportation services



# CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE

	Objective	SY17-18 Baseline	SY18-19 Goal	SY19-20 Goal	SY20-21 Goal	SY21-22 Goal	SY22-23 Goal	SY23-24 Goal
<b>Exceptional Place to Work and Learn</b>	**Percentage of teachers who agree or strongly agree with the statement, "The central office is a place that supports teachers."	43.1%	46.7%	50.0%	53.1%	56.0%	58.8%	61.4%
	**Percentage of teachers who agree or strongly agree with the statement, "My school is a good place to work and learn."	80.7%	81.9%	83.0%	84.1%	85.1%	86.0%	86.9%
	***Percentage of classified staff who agree or strongly agree with the statement, "My school is a good place to work and learn."	—	—	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	*Percentage of parents who agree or strongly agree with the statement, "This school does not tolerate bullying."	67.7%	72.3%	76.8%	81.4%	85.9%	90.5%	95.0%
	Annual attrition rate for School Security Officers	15%	13.4%	11.8%	10.2%	8.6%	7.0%	5.0%
	Percentile rank of KCS educator total compensation across all Tennessee public school districts	35.0%	40.0%	45.0%	50.0%	55.0%	60.0%	65.0%
<b>Effective Communication</b>	*Percentage of parents responding "very well" or "excelling" to the question, "How well is this school doing using multiple communication paths?"	77.0%	80.0%	83.0%	86.0%	89.0%	92.0%	95.0%
	*Percentage of parents responding "very well" or "excelling" to the question, "How well is this school doing at providing information on current issues?"	68.4%	72.8%	77.3%	81.7%	86.1%	90.6%	95.0%
	*Percentage of parents responding "very well" or "excelling" to the question, "How well is this school doing at ensuring parent-teacher communication about student progress?"	66.0%	70.8%	75.7%	80.5%	85.3%	90.2%	95.0%
	*Percentage of parents responding "very well" or "excelling" to the question, "How well is this school doing at partnering with community groups to strengthen families and support student success?"	53.7%	60.6%	67.5%	74.4%	81.2%	88.1%	95.0%
<b>Strong Fiscal Management</b>	Number of audit findings associated with internal school funds	736	700	665	630	595	560	525
	Number of financial audit findings at the district level	3	1	0	0	0	0	0

\* Parent Satisfactory Survey  
 \*\* District Culture Survey  
 \*\*\*Classified Staff Survey

# REFERENCES

## Parent Satisfaction Survey

The Parent Satisfaction Survey seeks to gather perception data from parents and guardians regarding their experience with a particular Knox County school in two areas: 1) family and community engagement at the school and 2) the school's culture and practices. Specifically, survey items ask about:

- Relationships, communication, and collaboration with school personnel
- The school's ability to address obstacles and resolve conflicts
- Representation of families in decision-making
- Expectations, behavior and discipline for students
- The quality of education and preparation of students for the future

## District Culture Survey

The District Culture Survey seeks to gather perception data from teachers regarding the performance of each administrator at their school in the context of the TEAM administrator evaluation rubric, i.e. the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS). The four TILS standards consist of:

- Instructional leadership for continuous improvement
- Culture for teaching and learning
- Professional learning and growth
- Resource management

Additionally, teachers are asked to complete a brief questionnaire regarding the general culture at their school.

## DEO Recommendations Timeline

Upon completion of a year-and-a-half study of disparities in education outcomes in Knox County Schools, the DEO Task Force issued a final report in May 2016. The report called for the development of a clear implementation plan for accomplishing outlined goals that included responsible stakeholders and a specific timeline. The initial Task Force was transitioned into a Steering Committee which began its work in the Fall of 2016. The committee's primary focus was to ensure that the timeline is being followed and action steps are being achieved. It is a five-year process and the implementation is currently in its third year.

**To view the results of the most recent Parent Satisfaction and District Culture surveys and the DEO Recommendations Timeline, please visit [www.knoxschools.org/strategicplan](http://www.knoxschools.org/strategicplan).**

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**ACT** – National college-readiness test that is frequently used for post-secondary admissions and scholarships.

**Advanced Academics** – High-level course offerings from programs including Advanced Placement, Cambridge International and International Baccalaureate.

**Advanced Placement (AP)** – Advanced courses for high school students that focus on critical thinking and an intensive focus on specific subjects.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** – Traumatic events that happen in childhood – including exposure to abuse, neglect, poverty and violence – that can increase the occurrence of risky behaviors, chronic health conditions and other negative outcomes.

**Cambridge International** – K-12 curriculum program that focuses on advanced academics and flexibility in implementation.

**Career & Technical Education (CTE)** – Curriculum program that focuses on providing students of all ages with the academic and technical skills, knowledge and training necessary to succeed in future careers and to become lifelong learners.

**Cultural Competency** – The ability to understand and engage the diverse life experiences, cultural backgrounds, skills and perspectives of students, their families and staff. KCS has begun providing cultural competency training to employees in an effort to eliminate systematic disparities in discipline and to ensure academic growth and achievement for all students.

**Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force (DEO)** – A KCS task force created in November 2014 to recommend strategies for addressing disparities in academic achievement and discipline outcomes that might be correlated with income, race, language and/or disability. The task force includes business, community and faith-based stakeholders.

**Dual Enrollment** – Classes that allow students to earn high school credit and college credit at the same time.

**End-of-Course Exam (EOC)** – Tests required by the State of Tennessee for certain courses that must be taken at the end of semester in order to receive credit.

**English Language Learners (ELL)** – Non-native English speakers who are seeking to become fully proficient in English.

**International Baccalaureate (IB)** – Curriculum program that combines rigorous coursework with a focus on inter-cultural understanding and respect. IB programs are currently in place at Bearden Middle School and West High School.

**Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** – A research-based framework for promoting social and behavioral competence, particularly through consistent acknowledgment of positive behavior and reasonable consequences for negative behavior.

**Ready Graduate** – A set of state criteria that measures postsecondary and career readiness among high school graduates.

**Restorative Practices** – Processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.

**Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS)** – A measurement of student growth year over year, regardless of whether the student is proficient on the state assessment. In calculating a TVAAS score, a student's performance is compared relative to the performance of his or her peers who have performed similarly on past assessments.

**Year-long Reading Course** – A professional development from the State of Tennessee that aims to build teacher content knowledge and improve the foundational reading skills of students.

# KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**Bob Thomas, Superintendent**

\*As of Nov. 2020

## **Vision Statement**

To grow lifelong learners who contribute their talents, strengths and skills to build a stronger community

## **Mission Statement**

To provide excellent and accessible learning opportunities that empower all students to realize their full potential