

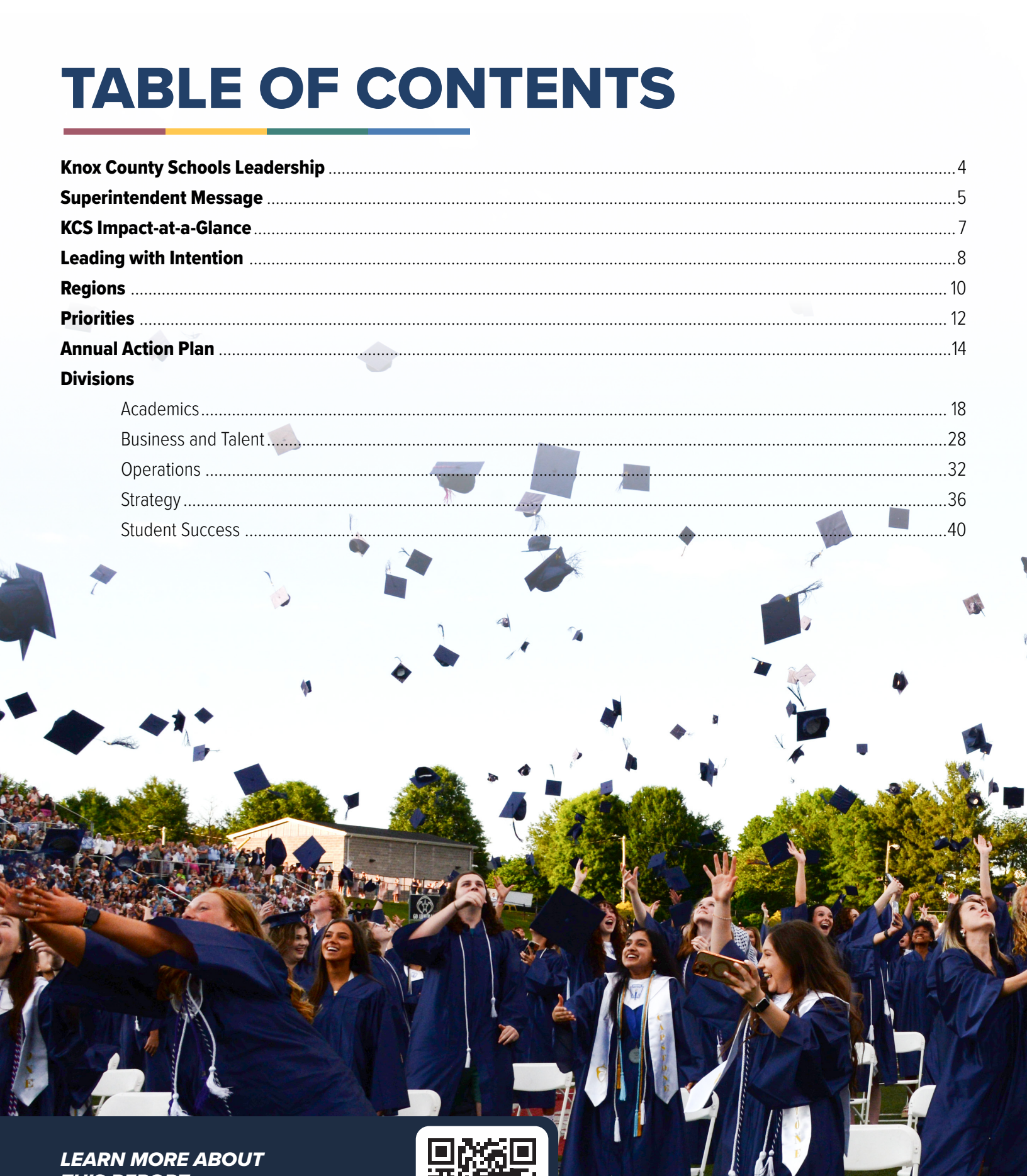


# KCS IMPACT

LEADING WITH INTENTION  
2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

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Superintendent

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Chief of Staff      Senior Advisor

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of Academics

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Shannon Jackson - Executive Director of College and Career Readiness  
Dr. Erin Phillips - Executive Director of Teaching and Learning  
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Nathan Langlois - Director of Region 2  
Megan O'Dell - Director of Region 3  
Cindy White - Director of Region 4  
Dr. Dexter Murphy - Director of Region 5

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Doug Shover - Director of Facilities and New Construction  
Chris Towe - Director of Maintenance and Operations  
Jason Periard - Chief of Security  
Freddie Cox - Chief Technology Officer  
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of Strategy

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Tammi Campbell - Director of Student and Family Supports

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Assistant Superintendent  
of Student Success

Janice Cook - Executive Director of School Culture  
Dr. Karen Loy - Executive Director of Special Education  
Brian Hartsell - Director of Student Discipline  
Alicia Jones - Executive Director of Student Supports



# MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Two years ago, I began as superintendent with a clear mission: to ensure every student in Knox County Schools thrives. Achieving that vision requires a deliberate, well-structured plan, and I'm proud to say that our focus on creating safe, instructionally rich environments has been guided by our district's four priorities every step of the way.

This past year, we made meaningful strides by prioritizing transparency, streamlining district processes, and empowering principals to lead with confidence and purpose. These efforts are all rooted in one goal: preparing the next generation of Knox County for success.

From streamlining our hiring practices to reimagining our budgeting process to making intentional investments in our staff, we've worked to simplify complex systems and make them accessible for everyone we serve. As a former teacher, I know the power of breaking down challenges into actionable steps. At the district level, we are committed to doing just that.

One initiative I'm particularly proud of is our Regional Support Model. Knox County is a diverse district, serving rural, suburban, and urban communities, each with unique needs. By regionalizing our support, we've strengthened our ability to provide targeted assistance, ensuring schools have the resources and guidance they need. I am incredibly grateful for the leadership and dedication of our district and regional leaders, school administrators, and educators who have made this work possible.

Our progress has been fueled by feedback from families and the community, which continues to shape our efforts. With your input, we've strengthened our support for schools, simplified key processes, and achieved milestones that directly impact our students' success.

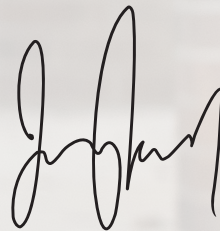
Some of our most notable achievements last year included:

- **Exceeding 50% proficiency in 4th grade ELA for the first time** through our focus on foundational literacy;
- **Simplifying the hiring process and investing over \$44.46 million in staff compensation**, resulting in a historic reduction in vacancies;

- **Completing the expansion of the 865 Academies** to every traditional KCS high school;
- **Enhancing school improvement planning** to align individual school goals to the overall mission of the district and improve outcomes;
- **Delivering targeted, comprehensive training and support to principals**, giving them the tools and data they need to lead with confidence; and
- **Conducting a districtwide facilities assessment** to guide strategic capital planning.

This report highlights the outcomes of our intentional efforts and outlines our vision for continuous improvement as we move forward. By staying focused on our four priorities, we will continue to move the needle on student success.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership in this important work. Together, we are building a stronger future for every student in Knox County Schools.



Sincerely,  
Dr. Jon Rysewyk  
Superintendent





# KCS IMPACT AT-A-GLANCE

**68<sup>th</sup>**

LARGEST DISTRICT  
IN THE NATION



**60,806**  
STUDENTS



**9,131**  
EMPLOYEES  
5,059 CERTIFIED  
4,072 CLASSIFIED



**91**  
SCHOOLS



MORE THAN  
**120**  
LANGUAGES  
& DIALECTS

**93%**

GRADUATION RATE,  
UP FROM 90%

**\$44 million**

INVESTMENT IN  
STAFF RETENTION

**9%**

INCREASE IN 3RD GRADE  
ELA PROFICIENCY OVER  
THREE YEARS

**3 million**

MILES DRIVEN BY  
SCHOOL BUSES

**18,000**

STUDENTS IN  
THE 865 ACADEMIES

**88%**

OF SCHOOLS FULLY STAFFED ON  
THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

**\$15.3 million**

INVESTMENT IN HIGH-QUALITY  
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

**\$179 million**

IN SCHOLARSHIPS  
EARNED BY CLASS OF 2024

**\$3.2 million**

INVESTMENT IN  
SCHOOL SECURITY

**7.3 million**

MEALS SERVED  
LAST YEAR

**18**

TDOE REWARD  
SCHOOLS

**1,105**

STUDENTS GRADUATED  
WITH NATIONAL INDUSTRY  
CERTIFICATIONS

**4<sup>TH</sup> CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

NAMED FORBES "BEST PLACE TO WORK" (2021 - 2022 - 2023 - 2024)

# LEADING WITH INTENTION



On July 22, more than 200 principals and administrators gathered at Bearden High School to kick off the school year at the district's annual Principal Institute. The two-day conference is designed to equip principals with resources, strategies, and opportunities to collaborate with peers ahead of the upcoming school year. During the opening session, Superintendent Dr. Jon Rysewyk issued a charge to district and school leaders: **"Take the time to make complex simple. Make big feel small."**

The superintendent went on to add, "This is how we ensure every member of our team knows exactly how they are uniquely positioned to impact student achievement, and how we make a district of more than 60,000 students feel like home for every child."

It's a tall order for a district that serves a community as large as Knox County. Spanning more than 526 square miles, Knox County, Tennessee is a demographically and geographically rich region, encompassing rural, urban, and suburban communities as well as two independent municipalities: the City of Knoxville and the Town of Farragut.

In the two years since Dr. Rysewyk stepped into the role of superintendent, KCS has:

- **Established four core priorities:** Excellence in Foundational Skills; Great Educators in Every School; Career Empowerment and Preparation; and Success for Every Student;
- **Reorganized the district office into five operational divisions:** Academics; Business and Talent; Operations; Strategy; and Student Success; and
- **Organized schools into five geographical regions** to streamline supervision and enhance support.

"This is how we make big feel small," Dr. Rysewyk explained. "This is how we make complex simple." And the work is already paying off. By focusing on clear priorities, Knox County Schools has built a foundation for sustained progress, and is working to ensure that every initiative aligns with the district's vision for student success.



The focus on **Excellence in Foundational Skills** has led to targeted interventions in literacy and math, areas critical to long-term student success. Early assessments already show promising academic growth, particularly in elementary grades. Teachers equipped with better resources and actionable data can meet students where they are and provide tailored support to address individual learning needs, ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive.

The commitment to having **Great Educators in Every School** has resulted in enhanced recruitment efforts, increased teacher salaries, and expanded professional development opportunities. These initiatives are critical to ensuring teachers feel supported, valued, and equipped to deliver high-quality instruction every day.

**Career Empowerment and Preparation** means preparing students for life after graduation—whether that’s *enlistment* in the military, *employment* in a high-wage, high-demand job, or *enrollment* in a postsecondary institution. This is the mission of the district’s 865 Academies, which have now been fully expanded to all 14 of KCS’s traditional high schools. With the help of the Knox Education Foundation and the Knoxville Chamber, local businesses are continuing to connect students to meaningful college and career experiences in pursuit of this important mission.

**Success for Every Student** means that every student, regardless of background or ability, has the opportunity to thrive throughout school and after graduation. Improving special education services, increasing resources for English Language Learners (ELL), and targeting interventions and tutoring programs are all part of ongoing efforts to close achievement gaps.

“We had to start somewhere,” the superintendent told district and school leaders. “So, we began with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In a lot of ways, that first year was the *Year of the SLT*. We took the time to define the unique role each division plays in forwarding our mission as a district, and we identified the change work we needed to engage in to ensure every division was ready to deliver on their specific objectives.”

That starting point quickly evolved into a three-year roadmap for clarifying roles and responsibilities and streamlining work across the district. The *Year of the SLT* was immediately followed by the *Year of the DLT*, or District Leadership Team. Where the *Year of the SLT* focused on the Senior Leadership Team—the district’s five assistant superintendents and personnel in the Office of the Superintendent—the *Year of the DLT* passed the torch to department leaders, charging every member of the District Leadership Team with clearly and coherently defining their work through the lens of the district’s four core priorities.

Region 2 Director Nathan Langlois summarized the success perfectly:

**“Dr. Rysewyk challenged us to make deliberate choices and take purposeful action to support one another in providing better service to teachers, students, and families. These departmental, divisional, and regional successes aren’t surprising; they are the intended outcomes of intentional work.”**

This commitment to simplifying complex challenges and making big feel small is evident throughout the Annual Report, showcasing how strategic efforts have translated into meaningful progress for stakeholders across the district.

That work is set to carry into the 2024-25 school year with the *Year of the Principal*, an intentional culture shift that underscores the responsibility of every school in advancing the district’s priorities and goals. The *Year of the Principal* recognizes school leaders as the stewards of a shared vision, empowering them to create cohesive and impactful learning environments.

“At KCS, we are not a district of 91 individual schools,” said Dr. Rysewyk. “We are a unified system of preschool, elementary, middle, and high schools dedicated to preparing 60,000 students for success after graduation.”



# KCS REGIONS

## REGION 1

Region One schools are located along or near Kingston Pike and Westland Drive or their connectors. School board members Reverend John Butler, Patricia Fontenot-Ridley, Katherine Bike, and Lauren Morgan serve Region One communities.



**Dr. Shelly Maddux**  
*Director*



**Seth Smith**  
*Supervisor*



## REGION 2



**Nathan Langlois**  
*Director*



**Christy Dowell**  
*Supervisor*

Region Two schools are located north of Interstate 40 and in the area between the Clinch and Tennessee Rivers. School board members Patricia Fontenot-Ridley, Betsy Henderson, and Steve Triplett serve Region Two communities.

## REGION 3

Region Three schools are located in the area between the Holston and French Broad Rivers. School board members Rev. Dr. John Butler, Travis Wright, and Kristi Kristy serve Region Three communities.



**Megan O'Dell**  
*Director*



**Tommy Watson**  
*Supervisor*



## REGION 4



**Cindy White**  
*Director*



**Adam Parker**  
*Supervisor*

Region Four schools are located in communities connected by Beaver Creek in the Northeast section of the county. School board members Anne Templeton, Steve Triplett, and Travis Wright serve Region Four communities.

## REGION 5

Region Five schools are located inside the city limits, north of the Tennessee River, and are some of the most historic in the county. School board members Rev. Dr. John Butler and Anne Templeton serve Region Five communities.



**Dr. Dexter Murphy**  
*Director*



**Sallee Reynolds**  
*Supervisor*



## SCHOOLS

A.L. Lotts Elementary  
Bearden Elementary  
Bearden Middle  
Bearden High  
Blue Grass Elementary

Farragut Primary  
Farragut Intermediate  
Farragut Middle  
Farragut High  
Northshore Elementary

Pond Gap Elementary  
Rocky Hill Elementary  
Sequoyah Elementary  
West High  
West Hills Elementary

West Valley Middle  
West View Elementary



## SCHOOLS

Amherst Elementary  
Ball Camp Elementary  
Cedar Bluff Elementary  
Cedar Bluff Middle  
Hardin Valley Elementary

Hardin Valley Middle  
Hardin Valley Academy  
Karns Elementary  
Karns Middle  
Karns High

Mill Creek Elementary  
Northwest Middle  
Norwood Elementary  
Pleasant Ridge Elementary  
Powell Elementary

Powell Middle  
Powell High  
Ridgedale  
West Haven Elementary  
Knox County Virtual School



## SCHOOLS

Bonny Kate Elementary  
Career Magnet Academy  
Carter Elementary  
Carter Middle  
Carter High

Chilhowee Intermediate  
Dogwood Elementary  
East Knox Elementary  
Gap Creek Elementary  
L&N STEM Academy

Mooreland Heights Elementary  
Mount Olive Elementary  
New Hopewell Elementary  
Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy  
South-Doyle Middle

South-Doyle High  
South Knox Elementary  
Sunnyview Primary



## SCHOOLS

Adrian Burnett Elementary  
Brickey-McCloud Elementary  
Central High  
Copper Ridge Elementary  
Corryton Elementary

Fountain City Elementary  
Gibbs Elementary  
Gibbs Middle  
Gibbs High  
Gresham Middle

Halls Elementary  
Halls Middle  
Halls High  
Inskip Elementary  
K.A.E.C.

Richard Yoakley  
Ritta Elementary  
Shannondale Elementary  
Sterchi Elementary



## SCHOOLS

Austin-East Magnet High  
Beaumont Magnet Academy  
Belle Morris Elementary  
Christenberry Elementary

Fulton High  
Green Magnet Academy  
Holston Middle  
Lonsdale Elementary

Maynard Elementary  
Sarah Moore Greene Magnet  
Academy  
Spring Hill Elementary

Vine Middle Magnet  
Whittle Springs Middle



# 4 THE PRIORITIES

## EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Early literacy and middle school math are **foundational to a student's academic and lifelong success.**

By preparing students to read proficiently by 3rd grade and to reach or surpass proficiency in Algebra I by 9th grade, KCS is **equipping every student with the skills needed to succeed in and beyond the classroom.**



## GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL

Great educators are core to the mission of KCS. By **investing in meaningful professional development and growth opportunities**, and pursuing **innovative strategies to retain and recruit high-quality educators**, KCS is positioning great educators in every classroom.



## CAREER EMPOWERMENT AND PREPARATION

KCS is committed to preparing students for **life after graduation**. By providing students with **early and meaningful opportunities to explore colleges and careers**, KCS is empowering students to approach their future with confidence, prepared for the 3 E's: enrollment, enlistment, or employment.



## SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

**All students** have unique abilities, needs, personalities, and ambitions, and KCS is committed to equipping every student with the **individualized services, interventions, resources, and supports** needed to **achieve success**—no matter their zip code, culture, or financial resources.





## FROM PRESCHOOL TO ACADEMIES

At KCS, commitment to the four priorities begins before students ever enter kindergarten. KCS invests in early education through its expansive preschool programs. With over 100 preschool classrooms across the district, KCS serves approximately 880 students between the ages of 3 and 5. These programs, including a blended program that serves students with disabilities alongside their peers, focus on kindergarten readiness by ensuring students develop essential skills, from understanding social norms and classroom behaviors to building early literacy and numeracy—foundations that are important for reaching future learning milestones.

“Children are being raised in a digital environment,” said Dr. Beth Lackey, Early Childhood Director. “We’ve noticed many children enter school already struggling with age-appropriate verbal skills. Many also have poor fine motor skills because they’ve used digital devices rather than crayons and pencils. This affects their ability to complete basic actions like tying shoes, buttoning their own clothes, and gripping a pencil.”

Dr. Lackey added, “Preschool’s role is to prepare students to function in the classroom. It’s more than just knowing your ABCs—you can’t even get to that if you don’t know how to raise your hand, walk in a line, or take turns.”

In the classroom, this preparation involves helping students thrive in a structured environment while building early academic skills. Preschool teachers use play-based learning and intentional instruction to develop students’ cognitive, social, and emotional abilities.

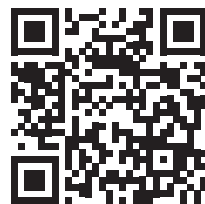
This approach is similar to the 865 Academies’ Freshman Academy, which helps students transition to high school by guiding them through social expectations and fostering the learning habits needed for success. Both initiatives focus on preparing students for academic and personal growth.

Each year, kindergarten teachers provide feedback to help improve the preschool program. In 2024, 45% of teachers reported that students who participated in the preschool program had above average or outstanding behavior, meaning they were better prepared to follow expectations in the classroom. Feedback from kindergarten teachers also led to the adoption of a new curriculum, *Heggerty*, that follows evidence-based practices in its approach to teaching foundational literacy skills.

KCS’s commitment to building foundational skills doesn’t end in preschool—it continues through every grade. From early education to high school, KCS ensures that students are consistently developing the competencies they need for postsecondary success.

### PRESCHOOLS

Cedar Bluff Preschool  
Fair Garden Family Center  
Fort Sanders Educational Development Center  
Karns Preschool



**LEARN MORE ABOUT  
KCS PRESCHOOLS**

[KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/PRESCHOOL](https://KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/PRESCHOOL)

# ANNUAL ACTION PLAN



“Bright futures for children start with purposeful efforts made today,” said Dr. Rysewyk. “Everything we did yesterday and everything we’ll do today plays a crucial part in shaping the broader picture of success tomorrow.”

Aligned with both the Knox County Board of Education’s five-year strategic plan and the district’s four priorities, the Annual Action Plan (AAP) frames the intentional actions KCS takes in a single year to meet the ambitious goals of accelerating student learning and increasing academic outcomes.

Assistant Superintendent of Strategy Kori Lautner explains it this way, “Five-year strategic plans are instrumental in casting a vision for long-term success, but it’s tough to make five years from now feel relevant today. The Annual Action Plan connects the dots by identifying what needs to be true this year to ensure we are where we want to be five years from now.”

The 2023-24 Annual Action Plan established a total of 38 objectives. As illustrated by the table below, **KCS met or exceeded 27.5 of those objectives and made meaningful gains in the other 10.5 objectives.** Results can be found on pages 15-17 of this report.

2023-24 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN RESULTS	MET	NOT MET
Leadership of the District	8	0
Excellence in Foundational Skills	4	2
Great Educators in Every School	7	2
Career Empowerment and Preparation	5.5	2.5
Success for Every Student	3	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>10.5</b>



# 2023-24 RESULTS

The Annual Action Plan consists of measurable and milestone objectives. **Measurable** objectives are quantifiable measures of success capable of year-over-year monitoring. The results of measurable objectives will be reflected in a comparison of 2023 data to 2024 outcomes. **Milestone** objectives represent significant, one-time achievements or critical progress improvements. As a result, these objectives are not accompanied by measurable data points for year-over-year comparison.

## LEADERSHIP OF THE DISTRICT

### Action: Maintain effective communication with the Board, staff, families, and other key stakeholders

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Establish effective systems and structures to improve families' access to district information, resources, and supports	--	--	--	●
Maintain strategic relationships with key officials (Board, mayors, community leaders and organizations, etc.)	--	--	--	●
Leverage multiple channels of communication to enhance awareness of district work priorities and mission among internal and external stakeholders	--	--	--	●

### Action: Leverage channels of community input to support the district's four priorities

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Leverage law enforcement partnerships to enhance school safety and security	--	--	--	●
Collaborate with Regional Family and Teacher Councils to enhance engagement and forward district priorities	--	--	--	●
Collaborate with districtwide councils (CASL, CEO Champions, Student Leadership, etc.) to enhance engagement and forward district priorities	--	--	--	●

### Action: Maximize the budget by aligning work and resources around the four district priorities

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Develop an annual Return on Investment and comprehensive financial status report to monitor effectiveness of pilot and major-dollar initiatives	--	--	--	●
Complete a comprehensive facility assessment to inform development of the annual budget	--	--	--	●

## EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

### Action: Enhance instruction through the development of deep content knowledge in ELA educators

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase 3rd grade proficiency <sup>1</sup> rates on TCAP by 1.9%	42.9%	43.5%	0.6%	○
Decrease percent of 3rd graders performing below the 40th percentile on Aimsweb <sup>2</sup> by 1.5%	42.9%	40.3%	-2.6%	●

### Action: Enhance instruction through the development of deep content knowledge in math educators

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase Algebra I proficiency <sup>1</sup> rates by 2.5%	20.2%	24.2%	4.0%	●
Increase math proficiency <sup>1</sup> for 6th-8th graders by 1.9%	32.2%	35%	2.8%	●

### Action: Concentrate resources to ensure highly effective reading and writing strategies are being implemented in every ELA classroom districtwide

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase ELA proficiency <sup>1</sup> for 3rd-8th grade by 1.9%	39.5%	40.3%	0.8%	○
Decrease percent of students performing below the 40th percentile on Aimsweb <sup>2</sup> by 1.1%	34.4%	32.1%	-2.3%	●

<sup>1</sup> **Proficiency:** performance demonstrates that the student has a comprehensive understanding and a thorough ability to apply the grade/course-level knowledge and skills defined by the Tennessee Academic Standards

<sup>2</sup> **Aimsweb:** RTI2 universal screener that assesses each student's foundational reading skills

- Met or exceeded goal
- Did not reach goal
- Milestone objective, no measurable outcomes

# ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

## 2023-24 RESULTS CONTINUED

### GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL

**Action: Establish innovative strategies to position highly qualified educators in every classroom**

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase enrollment in EPP <sup>3</sup> by 10%	35	40	14%	●
Increase enrollment in district-supported teacher pathways by 15%	144	180	25%	●
Increase the number of external applicants for teaching positions by 5%	562	800	42.3%	●

**Action: Recruit and retain highly effective teachers in areas of greatest need**

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase retention of highly effective teachers <sup>4</sup> by 2%	94%	--	--	--
Increase teacher compensation by 4%	4%	10%	6%	●
Increase percent of teachers of color by 5%	5.8%	6.1%	0.3%	○

**Action: Create opportunities for educators to grow professionally and to receive exposure to leadership development**

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Develop an intentional framework for district-led professional development based on student data and district and school improvement plans	--	--	--	●
Invest in high-quality training and leadership development opportunities for school leaders and central office administrators	--	--	--	●
Leverage input and feedback from Regional Teacher Councils to improve and enhance professional development opportunities and district-level support	--	--	--	●

### CAREER EMPOWERMENT & PREPARATION

**Action: Reimagine systems and structures to ensure all students have access to college and career opportunities and are prepared for success after graduation**

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase the number of high schools engaged in the 865 Academies <sup>5</sup> to 14	10	14	4	●
Develop a consistent implementation model for secondary counseling centered on preparing students for success in college or career	--	--	--	●
Increase the percent of students who have completed an aptitude assessment to 90% in middle school and 90% in 9th grade	8th Grade 81% 9th Grade 76.2%	8th Grade 90% 9th Grade 79%	8th Grade 9% 9th Grade 2.8%	● ○

**Action: Advance local business, postsecondary, and non-profit partnerships for all schools**

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Enhance and strengthen district-wide committees of business, postsecondary, and non-profit leaders to support schools	--	--	--	●
Establish a strategic framework through which businesses and community organizations or institutions can effectively support schools and major district initiatives	--	--	--	●

**Action: Create meaningful industry and postsecondary experiences to instill students with the 865Ready Portrait of a Graduate characteristics: lifelong learner, effective communicator, collaborative teammate, creative problem-solver, and community minded-citizen**

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase the percent of students enrolled in EPSOs <sup>6</sup> by 1.2%	60.1%	65.3%	5.2%	●
Create a catalog of high-quality college and career exposure opportunities for elementary and middle school students	--	--	--	○
Increase Ready Graduate rate by 1.8%	43.7%	46.2%	2.5%	●



# SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

## Action: Implement plans to address achievement gaps for underperforming student groups

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Increase math achievement among state identified groups by 2.7%	21%	18.3%	-2.7%	○
• Black/Hispanic/Native American	15.7%	16.8%	1.1%	
• Economically Disadvantaged	12.9%	13.7%	0.8%	
• English Learners	16.5%	16.3%	-0.2%	
• Students with Disabilities	10.5%	11.9%	1.4%	

Increase ELA achievement among state identified groups by 2.6%	21.5%	21.6%	0.1%	○
• Black/Hispanic/Native American	21.6%	21.6%	0%	
• Economically Disadvantaged	18.3%	17.8%	-0.5%	
• English Learners	14.2%	13.8%	-0.4%	
• Students with Disabilities	10.4%	11.6%	1.2%	

## Action: Enhance processes to address mental health obstacles and challenges

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Establish a process to leverage Whole Child Support Team data to identify trends and deploy school-specific supports	--	--	--	●
Decrease chronic absenteeism <sup>9</sup> by 2%	21%	18.2%	-2.8%	●

## Action: Develop a strategic plan to address needs for underperforming schools

Objective	2022-2023	2023-2024	Change	Met
Strategically leverage community partnerships to support the needs of students and families in Region 5	--	--	--	●
Increase 3rd grade ELA proficiency in Region 5 schools by 2.5%	21.6%	20.7%	-0.9%	○
Increase 8th grade math proficiency in Region 5 schools by 2.7%	7.3%	7%	-0.3%	○

<sup>3</sup> **Education Prep Provider (EPP):** postsecondary institution approved by the Tennessee State Board of Education to train students to become certified teachers

<sup>4</sup> **Highly effective teacher:** a teacher who receives a 4 or higher on their annual TIGER Evaluation (Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results)

<sup>5</sup> **The 865 Academies:** cohort of high schools that are launching career-themed academies (or small learning communities), which will enable students to: participate in authentic, work-based learning; receive opportunities for job shadowing and other career exploration activities; work closely with professionals in their field of interest; and create stronger connections between classroom knowledge and workplace success

<sup>6</sup> **EPSOs:** Early Postsecondary Opportunity, such as Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge International Examinations, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate (IB), or Student Industry Certification

<sup>7</sup> **Industry Certification:** Industry credentials are state-approved certifications recognized by certain industry sectors as a measure of general workforce readiness or emerging competency in a specific career-field

<sup>8</sup> **Whole Child Support Teams:** school-based teams that provide an efficient structure through which schools can gather information, identify needs, and plan supports for students and staff to facilitate student success

<sup>9</sup> **Chronic absenteeism:** students are considered chronically absent if they are absent 10% or more of the days they have been enrolled in the district

● **Met or exceeded goal**  
 ○ **Did not reach goal**  
 -- **Milestone objective, no measurable outcomes**

# ACADEMICS



**DR. KEITH WILSON**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
OF ACADEMICS

Departments

- Academic Supports
- College and Career Readiness
- Teaching and Learning
- Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5



The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—commonly known as the Nation’s Report Card—is a leading assessment of student performance in mathematics, reading, science, and writing. The most recent NAEP results indicated that only 33% of American children demonstrated proficiency in reading and only 36% demonstrated proficiency in math. The state of Tennessee has seen similar results, with 37% of students proficient in reading and 43% proficient in math.

This matters immensely considering the fact that reading proficiency is a leading indicator of academic achievement, postsecondary success, job stability, and earning potential. Similarly, mastery of mathematics fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability—skills essential for thriving in an increasingly automated and technology-driven workforce.

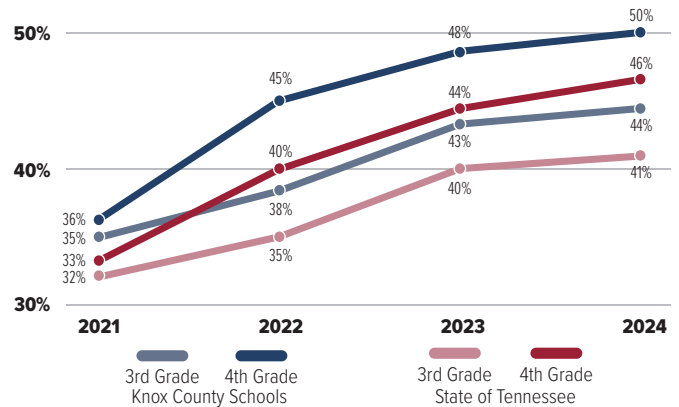
Two years ago, KCS Superintendent Dr. Jon Rysewyk established **Excellence in Foundational Skills**, specifically literacy and math skills, as one of the district’s four core priorities. That intentional focus—coupled with the dedication of students, teachers, and principals—is paying off.

Led by Assistant Superintendent Dr. Keith Wilson, the Academics Division cultivates strong school and classroom leaders through intentional professional development and regionalized instructional support to equip every student from preschool through high school with the skills, experiences, and opportunities needed to excel in and beyond the classroom.

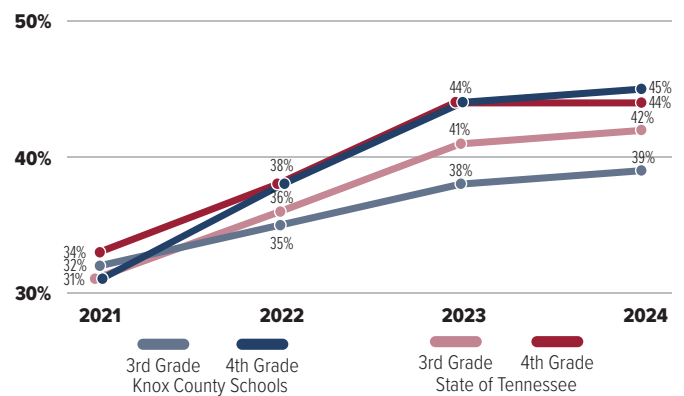
The Academics Division spent the 2023-24 school year focusing on the following:

- Conducting a **literacy landscape analysis** to establish a districtwide baseline for literacy instruction;
- Equipping every reading and math classroom with **high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)**;
- Developing a comprehensive **professional development** plan for principals and teachers; and
- **Expanding 865 Academies** to all 14 traditional high schools.

### ELA TCAP PROFICIENCY



### MATH TCAP PROFICIENCY



Proficiency is measured through the yearly TCAP assessment that evaluates a student’s understanding of grade-level concepts. At KCS, 3rd and 4th grade ELA proficiency has consistently outpaced state proficiency rates.



## LITERACY LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

In Spring 2024, KCS partnered with MGT Education—a national consulting agency specializing in educational research and evaluation—to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current state of K-5 literacy instruction throughout the district.

Over the course of nine weeks, MGT collected a variety of data through perception surveys, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations at all 52 KCS elementary schools. Their analysis centered on five key elements—or domains—of literacy instruction, including:

- Teachers' understanding of the **district's literacy vision and goals** and their ability to help students meet them;
- Availability of resources and professional development to support **Science of Reading** instruction and structured small group literacy work;
- Access to and use of Science of Reading-aligned **high-quality instructional materials** (HQIM);
- **Literacy instruction and assessment** practices; and
- Principal, teacher, and student **engagement**.

MGT categorized the district's progress in each of these domains of high-quality literacy across five stages of implementation:

- 1. Exploring** - Research-based literacy practices are being reviewed. No widespread professional development is being offered nor are essential literacy practices being implemented consistently.
- 2. Early** - Preliminary efforts have been made to implement research-based practices. Some high-impact instructional strategies and practices are in use, but frequency and consistency vary.
- 3. Customizing** - Educators are refining research-based practices to meet student needs. Assessment data and feedback are being used to adapt literacy practices. Implementation is mostly high-quality and consistent, but room for improvement exists.
- 4. Comprehensive** - Research-based practices are fully integrated into literacy instruction and educators are consistently applying evidence-based strategies and are unified in their commitment to promote reading success.
- 5. Sustaining** - The district has ingrained a commitment to research-based practices within its culture, ensuring continuity through leadership changes. Systems and structures are in place to provide ongoing support and professional development.

## NEXT STEPS

While the Literacy Landscape Analysis highlighted many bright spots, such as strong districtwide engagement, it also identified key areas for improvement, particularly in the tactical elements of literacy instruction. "These findings illustrate an opportunity to celebrate our successes and sharpen our focus on advancing the classroom practices we know drive student achievement," said Dr. Wilson.

Through the analysis, teachers identified critical opportunities to advance the implementation of the Science of Reading, such as:

- Aligning professional development consistently with district literacy goals, bridging the gap between theory and classroom practice.
- Providing targeted training to connect foundational Science of Reading principles with effective instructional strategies.
- Enhancing support for small group literacy instruction through additional staffing and tailored professional development opportunities.

With these insights in mind, KCS has committed to building on its progress and driving the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. For the 2024-25 school year, the district is taking intentional steps to improve early literacy outcomes by:

- **Expanding Professional Development:** Providing educators with practical, curriculum-aligned training that equips them to implement Science of Reading strategies effectively
- **Strengthening Regional Support:** Delivering targeted, ongoing coaching and assistance to help teachers apply evidence-based practices with confidence
- **Specializing in Small Group Instruction:** Offering tailored training to maximize the effectiveness of small group literacy interventions, a cornerstone of Tier 1 instruction

Literacy is a foundation for academic achievement and long-term success, and KCS is committed to ensuring every student has the skills to thrive. By leveraging findings from the Literacy Landscape Analysis, prioritizing professional development, and fostering instructional excellence, the district is positioned to make sustainable, measurable strides in literacy outcomes.

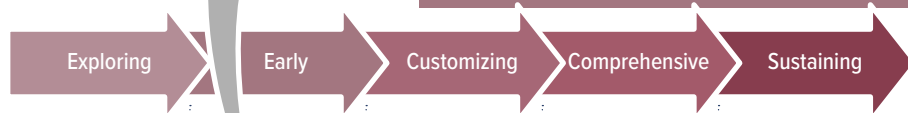
This work underscores a simple truth: When teachers are empowered with the right tools, training, and support, students succeed. As KCS continues to invest in its educators and students, the path forward is clear—intentional progress, unwavering commitment, and transformational impact.

# OUTCOMES REPORT:

## DISTRICT SUMMARY

### EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENCE OF READING

KCS is in the early stages of implementing the Science of Reading, with varying consistency in adoption of its practices across schools. As such, the district acknowledges the need to enhance training on Science of Reading strategies, bolster support for their effective implementation, and expand access to professional development that emphasizes applying these strategies within the current curriculum.



District Vision & Goals			✓		
Science of Reading	✓				
High-Quality Instructional Materials			✓		
Literacy Instruction & Assessment			✓		
Engagement					✓

### CUSTOMIZING LITERACY PRACTICES

Three domains—**district vision and goals**, **HQIM**, and **literacy instruction and assessment**—were categorized as being in the customizing implementation stage, which reflects the district’s ongoing efforts to refine and align strategies with a clear literacy vision for which most educators are equipped to help students succeed. Opportunities remain to deepen understanding and prepare all educators to meet diverse student needs.

KCS educators connect instruction and assessments to adapt lessons and provide targeted support, guided by vertically aligned HQIM that foster progressive knowledge building across grade levels. While these practices have established a strong foundation for literacy growth, the analysis identified areas for improvement, particularly in achieving more consistent implementation across the district.

### COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT

It was not surprising that engagement across the district was classified as comprehensive and poised for sustainability. For years, KCS educators have participated in the year-long reading course, making significant progress in integrating research-based practices aligned with the Science of Reading. These efforts have created dynamic classrooms where students are actively engaged in literacy instruction. Principals have supported this success by observing classrooms regularly and providing constructive feedback to refine engagement strategies.

***“Literacy is at the heart of student success, and we’re proud of the intentional focus our teachers and leaders place on developing proficient readers each day across KCS. At the same time, we recognize there’s always room for improvement. Partnering with a national group that specializes in evaluation has provided KCS with a critical examination of our current practices to help refine and reinforce aspects of our early literacy work to ensure every child develops the foundational skills they need to grow and succeed.”***

Dr. Keith Wilson

# ACADEMICS

## HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Just as architects use clear blueprints to guide construction teams, teachers deserve strong, reliable materials that provide a clear, research-based framework for learning.

In 2023, KCS made a significant investment of \$15.3 million in state-approved, high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for literacy and math, ensuring that every classroom across the district—spanning 91 schools—had access to the tools needed to deliver equitable, effective instruction.

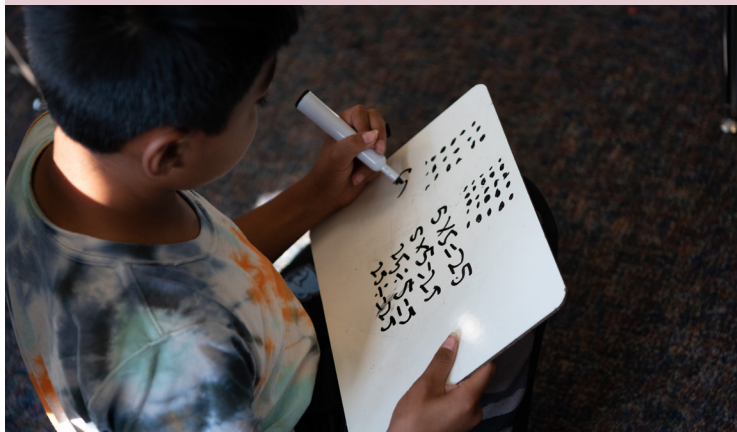
As part of a continued effort to build on the district's strong foundation of existing high-quality materials, K-8 math classrooms adopted the *Ready Math* curriculum to further strengthen math instruction.

Recognizing that teachers had already navigated multiple curriculum changes in recent years, the district approached this new shift with sensitivity and intentional support.

Dr. Wilson, along with the math leadership team, prioritized what was best for students, even though it meant moving away from familiar resources.

“Our math facilitators played a crucial role in helping school leaders and teachers adjust to the new curriculum,” said Gary Petko, Mathematics Supervisor. “They provided daily tailored tools and training to help teachers maximize the potential of *Ready Math*.”

***The HQIM investment is paying off!***



## WHAT IS READY MATH?

*Ready Math* utilizes the “**Try It-Discuss It-Connect It**” to facilitate mastery through contextual tasks and activities. Below is a simple explanation.

**Task: Separate 10 gummy bears into three groups.**

**TRY IT:** Make sense of the problem, support your thinking, complete the task.

I'm going to sort my gummy bears into one group of 5, another group of 3, and another pile of 2.

**DISCUSS IT:** Share thoughts and talk about processes as a class or in small groups.

Jack sorted his gummy bears into two piles of 4 and one pile of 2. Both ways groups 10 gummy bears and there are lots of other ways too.

**CONNECT IT:** Link task and various solutions to mathematical concepts and explore possible real world applications.

The way I sorted my gummy bears is the same as  $5+3+2=10$  and the way Jack sorted his gummy bears is the same as  $4+4+2=10$ . I could use this same process on other math problems, but also to help organize my toys or share snacks with friends.

## HQIM IN ACTION

School leaders—like Desiree Jones, Principal of Cedar Bluff Middle School—are invaluable in the implementation of HQIM, often learning the curriculum alongside their teachers so they could offer more meaningful feedback during classroom observations. Encouraging her teachers to embrace the new *Ready Math* curriculum resulted in a **6% increase in student math proficiency**.

Understanding the challenge that could be caused by yet another curriculum change—the third in three years—Principal Jones believed the only way to guide her staff effectively was to dive into the curriculum with them.

“The curriculum is great—that’s why it was selected,” she said. “But, I wanted them to trust it enough to try it, so I had to understand it myself.”

By learning alongside her teachers, participating in professional learning communities, and providing hands-on support, Principal Jones created an environment of collaboration.

Teachers Lindsay Lewis and Nadine Raines said of Principal Jones:

***“Her leadership helped us feel supported and empowered. That directly contributed to our success in implementing the curriculum and boosting student outcomes.”***

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the course of the 2023-24 school year, all five Regional Teacher Councils emphasized the need for tailored, high-impact professional development—echoing findings in the Literacy Landscape Analysis.

To provide the kind of support that meets the evolving needs of teachers and students, **KCS phased professional development efforts to guide educators in the early grades, enhance regional collaboration, and build an instructional framework.** Professional development started with training all principals on the implementation of the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG), then moved to an intentional focus on bolstering literacy in the early grades by leveraging the regional structure to provide increased support. This year, the *Instructional Framework* is being used to increase high-quality feedback, no matter the content area.

## THE EARLY GRADES


Data and research indicate that focusing on kindergarten through second grade will yield long-term benefits. Facilitators collaborated closely with K-2 teachers to implement strategies aligned with the Science of Reading, which outlines how children learn to read through essential skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension. Teaching these skills step-by-step with evidence-based practices enhances reading abilities for all students, particularly those who struggle. While the Science of Reading applies beyond early grades, establishing a solid literacy foundation in K-2 is crucial, as students without it are at higher risk for persistent low literacy rates throughout their academic careers.


## REGIONAL SUPPORT


2023-24 professional learning focused on enhancing principals’ instructional leadership across all content areas. Initially piloted in 2022, the Instructional Practice Guide outlines the essential elements of high-quality instruction for every classroom. In 2023, all principals received training to conduct IPG walkthroughs—brief classroom observations targeting specific areas of the IPG—alongside their regional support teams. This practice empowered principals to communicate consistent expectations for effective teaching and facilitated real-time, targeted feedback on skills and areas for improvement.

## LOOKING AHEAD

All KCS principals have classroom experience in their content areas, but instructional goals vary by subject. After numerous observations, regional leaders and content facilitators saw the need for content-specific baselines for classroom and leadership practices. In spring 2024, Dr. Erin Phillips coordinated over 15 content experts to develop the Instructional Framework, a guide for maximizing educator impact and improving student outcomes. This framework helps both leaders and teachers understand what high-quality instruction should look like for students, providing clear direction on effective practices across various subjects.

“  
  
 Though K-2 students aren’t tested on the TCAP, facilitator and elementary ELA team teacher training on the Science of Reading has already improved student decoding skills. These efforts will undoubtedly be reflected in academic progress over the coming years.  
*Danielle Hamilton*  
 K-5 ELA Supervisor

“  
  
 The IPG tool equips principals to offer real-time feedback on instructional practices, enabling timely and effective adjustments when they matter most. Previously, we relied on TNReady data, which often arrived too late to make meaningful changes during the school year.  
*Nathan Langlois*  
 Region 2 Director and former KCS Principal

“  
  
 The Instructional Framework provides clear, content-specific guidance for principals and teachers, ensuring high-quality instruction across all subjects. These consistent baselines maximize impact, ensure the best possible learning experience for every student, and—ultimately—improve outcomes.  
*Dr. Erin Phillips*  
 Executive Director of Teaching and Learning

# ACADEMICS

## THE 865 ACADEMIES

By January 2024, all 14 traditional KCS high schools had fully adopted the 865 Academies model, which is designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue careers aligned with their interests and talents via college or trade school enrollment, military service, or direct entry to the workforce.

To support this expansion, the district hired 40 additional CTE teachers through the KCS Educator Preparation Program. The district now boasts 41 academies with more than 85 pathways—including aviation, business, cyber security, nursing services, and welding, to name just a few.

**Since launching the 865 Academies, KCS has seen overall graduation rates climb from 89.7% to 93%, including significant increases across student groups.**

These results are a clear indication that the most effective way to prepare students for life after high school is to equip them with a broad set of skills and knowledge, enabling them to pursue careers aligned with their interests and talents.

## THE POWER OF PARTNERS

KCS leaders understand that the success of the 865 Academies is deeply rooted in support from community partners. The Knoxville Education Foundation (KEF) and the Knoxville Chamber—both founding partners of the 865 Academies—play a crucial role in connecting schools with business partners and postsecondary institutions that meet academy and pathway needs for guest speakers, work-based learning, job shadowing, specialized training, advisory board participation, and teacher externships.

“Academy partners are critical to the district’s ability to transform the high school experience,” said Shannon Jackson, Executive Director of College and Career Readiness. “We are fortunate to work with so many organizations who are committed to the mission of the 865 Academies and its impact on students.”

While the initial impact has been incredibly promising, KCS is continuing to expand outreach to ensure every student has ample opportunity to explore and better understand their interests and talents before graduation.

**“Sometimes discovering what you don’t want to do is just as valuable as—maybe more valuable than—discovering what you want to do,”** said Dr. Brad Corum, Director of Academies. **“The 865 Academies and their guaranteed experiences offer students a low-risk space to explore careers before making postsecondary decisions or entering the workforce.”**

The mission of public education has always been to prepare students for life after graduation. By providing industry experiences and career exploration opportunities through intentional partnerships, the 865 Academies fully realize this mission—equipping students with the skills and experiences needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond.







**93%**  
of KCS students  
graduated high school



**80+**  
students committed  
to military service



**69.4%**  
graduates enrolled in a  
postsecondary institution



**1,105**  
graduates with a  
National Industry Credential



**101**  
guest speakers



**24,876**  
EPSO credits earned



**468**  
business partners



**9,001**  
industry experiences



**2,088**  
postsecondary visits

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

	2022	2023	2024
All Students	89.7%	91%	93%
Black or African American	86.4%	87.8%	89.8%
Hispanic	77.9%	84.9%	89.8%
Economically Disadvantaged	78.8%	83.7%	84.1%
Students with Disabilities	72%	75.8%	78.7%
English Language Learners	65.2%	74.4%	79.5%
Homeless	62.4%	69.9%	75.3%



# ACADEMICS

## INSIDE THE 865 ACADEMIES



Josie McReery is a Carter cheerleader who loves sports and has dreams of being a sports broadcaster someday, but the moment she stepped into the welding facility at Carter, she knew she wanted to join the Academy of Engineering & Manufacturing. In addition to mastering welding, McReery is also gaining knowledge in business and manufacturing principles. She says even though welding is her backup career plan, she's grateful to learn a useful skill!

Jacob Neblett, a chef and 15-year veteran teacher, leads the Culinary Pathway at Karns High School. His program, which requires an application, fills up quickly. With high expectations and a well-structured approach, Neblett teaches students every aspect of restaurant work—from front-of-house service to kitchen operations. His students receive valuable hands-on experience in food service, including taking orders, preparing food, and processing payments. They also deliver meals through catering events at Karns and prepare meals for teachers each day, the revenue from which helps purchase important program ingredients.



A group of dedicated seniors from Hardin Valley Academy's 2024 Teaching as a Profession (TAP) program celebrated their commitment to becoming educators at a Future Teacher Signing event. Each student's journey into teaching was shaped by personal experiences, such as volunteering, family influences, and a passion for working with children. The TAP program gave them hands-on experience, assisting with lesson plans, building relationships with students, and learning the inner workings of school environments.





Brodie Hackworth, a junior in Central High School's JROTC program, earned his FAA Remote Pilot Certificate and now uses his drone photography skills to work with local Realtors. Hackworth also competes on Central's drone team and recently won a local competition. JROTC instructor Captain Russell Bazemore initially introduced drones to attract more students to the JROTC program, but believes knowledge of the technology will benefit students in the future, especially Hackworth whose goal is to become a naval aviator.

English, math, science, and social studies teachers from Halls High School participated in a teacher externship at the now-closed Tennessee Valley Authority's Bull Run Fossil Plant. These externships are designed to help educators enhance their teaching by exploring ways to integrate industry insights and career information into core content instruction, ultimately encouraging students to recognize the practical applications of classroom learning to different careers. The visit featured a guided tour of the plant and discussions about its future plans, providing teachers with valuable perspectives that can enrich their curriculum and inspire student engagement.



Farragut High students Abigail Van Orden and Aaron Pohl—juniors in the Academy of Health and Human Services—had the chance to job shadow at Black Dog Fitness, a gym for people with Parkinson's. While there, they observed trainers employing techniques to strengthen specific muscles affected by the disease. Reflecting on the experience, Van Orden said, "The work they do is truly incredible, and I'm thrilled to know careers like this exist." She plans to become a pediatric physical therapist focused on developmental conditions like cerebral palsy.



# BUSINESS AND TALENT

**A** 2023 report from the Department of Education identified more than 41,000 teacher vacancies across the nation. Meanwhile, the number of candidates entering teacher prep programs has been steadily declining since 2010. **Despite these odds, amid a national teacher shortage, KCS began the 2024-25 school year with record low vacancies in teaching positions.** Out of the district's 4,700 teaching positions, only six were vacant when schools opened their doors on August 8, 2024.

"It's a tremendous achievement," said Jennifer Hemmelgarn, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Talent. "We know that having a great educator in every classroom is the key to student success, and our team worked diligently to make that happen."

The Business and Talent Division—made up of the Finance, Human Resources Operations, and Talent Acquisition departments—is relatively new for the district. As a division, Business and Talent has been charged with retaining, attracting, and cultivating a highly skilled and diverse workforce and safeguarding public funds with integrity and transparency for the benefit of KCS students and families.

Last school year, the team concentrated its work on filling teacher vacancies through intentional retention and recruitment efforts. The Annual Action Plan identified a series of objectives to meet this goal, including:

- Establishing innovative strategies to position highly-qualified educators in every classroom;
- Recruiting and retaining highly-effective teachers in areas of greatest need; and
- Creating opportunities for educators to grow professionally and receive exposure to leadership development.



KCS leaders knew that recruiting and retaining high-quality educators amid a national teacher shortage would be a daunting challenge.

"Relying on the traditional hiring model—waiting for prospective teachers and staff to apply—wasn't going to help fill all our vacant positions," said Hemmelgarn. "We needed to be incredibly intentional about marketing the district as an exemplary place to work and be proactive in bringing new teachers to the district, no matter where or how they found us."

Facing this challenge head-on, KCS partnered with a third-party consultant to develop a strategic plan aimed at strengthening recruitment efforts. What started as a targeted approach to filling vacancies quickly evolved into a **districtwide, comprehensive talent strategy known as Teach Knox.**

Rooted in community and stakeholder feedback, Teach Knox was designed to reshape the hiring process and address every stage of the teacher pipeline—recruiting, retaining, and developing talented educators. While the teacher shortage remains a nationwide issue, Teach Knox has positioned KCS as a district that prioritizes talent acquisition and educator development, ensuring high standards of student achievement are maintained.



# RECRUITING THE BEST OF THE BEST

When establishing the Business and Talent Division in 2022, Superintendent Dr. Jon Rysewyk also created the district’s first Talent Acquisition Department. Led by Alex Moseman, the Talent Acquisition team took significant steps to streamline the hiring process, including lowering response times, assisting prospective teachers with licensure requirements, and more broadly showcasing the benefits of working for KCS.

In 2024, the district expanded recruitment efforts beyond Knox County and its surrounding areas—and beyond traditional educator pathways. The focus was on keeping interested candidates engaged throughout the process.

“KCS is competing with other school districts for great talent, but also with other organizations in the region,” said Moseman. “Speed and efficiency are key components to being successful in that environment.”

To do this, KCS implemented several additional strategies to further streamline the hiring process and support principals in meeting staffing needs. These included:

- **Working with principals to finalize staffing plans in early fall** with the help of district-provided planning resources and toolkits;
- **Enabling direct communication between candidates and principals**, allowing qualified educators to connect with schools that had open positions; and
- **Encouraging friendly competition** by sharing a weekly leaderboard that showcased schools achieving 100% staffing.

In addition to these efforts, KCS improved its partnerships with local Educator Prep Programs and launched programs like KCS Grow Your Own and KCS EPP job-embedded initiatives for occupational and CTE positions. These programs helped increase 2024-25 enrollment by 14%.

The district’s efforts paid off: by the start of the 2024 school year, only six full-time teaching positions remained unfilled. Hemmelgarn noted, “We are thrilled to be able to put our schools in a position like this.”

“We know exactly how we got here. The plan is to replicate what worked and improve what didn’t. **Our goal is to start the 2025-26 school year 100% staffed.** It’s an bold target but—for the first time—it’s one we can absolutely meet.”

Jennifer Hemmelgarn



**JENNIFER HEMMELGARN**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
OF BUSINESS AND TALENT

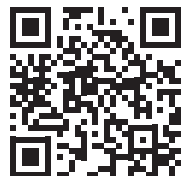
Departments

- Finance
- Human Resources Operations
- Talent Acquisition



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# BUSINESS AND TALENT

## RETAINING CLASSROOM STARS

Studies have shown that teachers experience the most professional growth during their first five years in the classroom. This is significant given the fact that 30% of teachers leave the profession within their first four years on the job. Meanwhile, the number of candidates entering education prep programs is continuing to decline. The reason? Polls consistently cite wages as one of the major deterrents for otherwise prospective educators.

Last year, KCS made a concentrated effort to tackle that challenge—for current and future teachers. The district contracted with Evergreen Solutions, LLC, to conduct a comprehensive salary study. The results revealed that some KCS employees were paid a wage closer to market value than others. While principal salaries were aligned with market rates, the salaries of new teachers, school nutrition workers, and custodians had fallen behind.

**“We can’t do this work without our people and our budget should reflect that. We chose to prioritize paying every person on our team a market value salary. We spent months working through the budget, making the intentional, tough choices that put us in a position to be able to make the historic investment in salaries that our people deserve.”**  
Dr. Jon Rysewyk

Acting on findings from Evergreen Solutions, KCS proposed a \$44.49 million investment in salary increases to the Board of Education. The result was an average salary increase of 12% across the district. Highlighting the magnitude of this investment, the district’s Annual Action

Plan called for a 4% increase in teacher salaries for the 2023-24 school year. KCS exceeded that goal by more than 6% with teachers receiving an average salary increase of 10%.

Salary adjustments of this kind are rarely possible without the support of a local tax increase or additional state and federal funding. KCS was able to fund these increases without either—choosing instead to intentionally reallocate funds and pay down debt to make the necessary space in the budget. More information on these decisions can be found on pages 46-47 of this report.

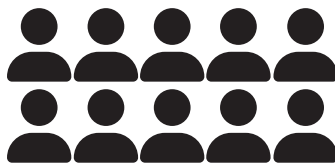
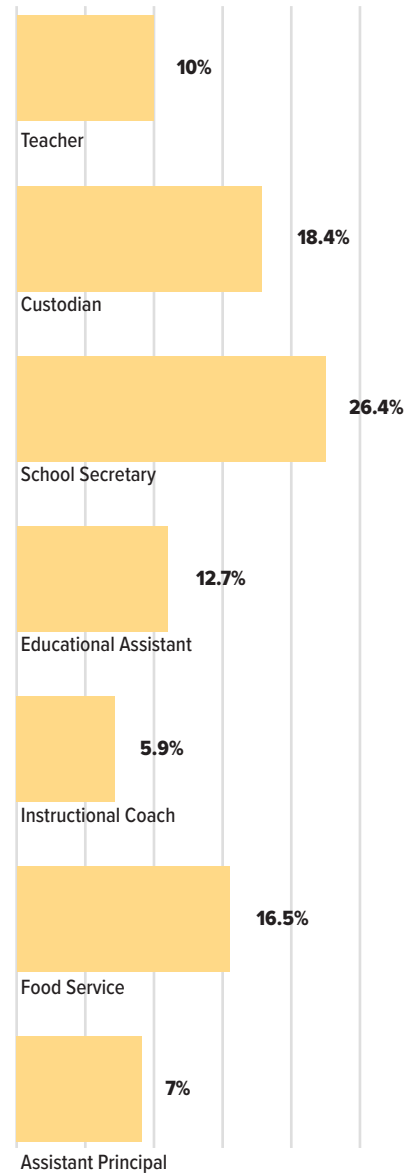
Evergreen Solutions, LLC, also commended the district noting it was the first employer—school district or otherwise—they worked with to make a transition of this scale in a single year.

“We implemented the district’s first major overhaul of salary schedules in a matter of months,” said Hemmelgarn. “It was an unprecedented decision, and we learned a lot during the process. But most importantly—it was the right thing to do.”

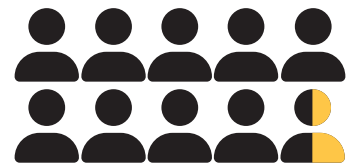
The HR Operations Department, led by Executive Director Scott Bolton, worked tirelessly throughout the spring and summer to ensure the salaries of more than 10,000 employees would reflect the new schedule before the start of the 2024-25 school year.

“We knew it was an ambitious undertaking and we knew implementation wouldn’t happen without hiccups,” said Bolton. “What matters at the end of the day is that people are being paid higher salaries, which puts us one step closer to having great educators in every school.”

## AVERAGE SALARY INCREASE



**100%** of employees received a salary increase



**95%** of employees received a salary increase of 4% or more.

The 2023 Annual Action Plan objective was to increase teacher compensation by 4%. In July 2024, the **average salary increase for teachers was 10.6%** on the new salary schedule.

## DEVELOPING STRONG LEADERS

Professional development is crucial for growing and retaining talent in any organization. Schools are no exception. Teacher development begins with effective principals. Through targeted professional development, KCS spent the 2023-24 school year investing in opportunities to develop principals as the building-level CEOs they are.

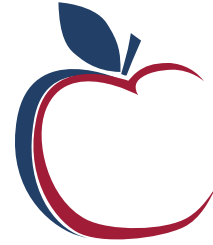
The responsibilities of principals stretch far beyond the classroom and often include administrative duties such as budgeting, staffing, maintenance, communications, and crisis management.

**“Principals are the CEOs of their schools and must have a diverse set of skills to lead effectively. As a district, we have to give them the support they need to develop and improve for all aspects of the job.”**

Dr. Jon Rysewyk

Under the direction of Assistant Superintendent of Academics Dr. Keith Wilson, KCS launched a year-long Executive Leadership Series. This program consisted of a series of panel discussions organized to connect principals with some of Knox County’s most successful community leaders and executives. Moderated by local talk-show host Hallerin Hilton Hill, panelists included former Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam; UT Medical Center president Dr. Keith Gray; Wakefield Corporation CEO Erin Wakefield Mahan; and University of Tennessee System president Randy Boyd.

The momentum generated by the Executive Leadership Series will be further leveraged as the district enters the 2024-25 school year—designated as the *Year of the Principal*—to continue enhancing leadership development and support for our school leaders.



## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP SERIES

### Role of the Principal *Focusing on the “Main Thing”*

Panelists:

Ed Hedgepeth, Dr. Sharon Roberts, and Dr. Donna Wright

### C-Suite Leadership *Managing Change and Driving Success*

Panelists:

Dr. Keith Gray, Erin Wakefield Mahan, and Wes Stowers

### Courageous and Confident Leadership *Inspiring Bold Action*

Panelists:

Bill Haslam and Randy Boyd



# OPERATIONS

The Operations Division, led by Assistant Superintendent Dr. Garfield Adams, is charged with maintaining safe, healthy, and engaging learning environments for each and every student. Comprised of six departments—Asset Management, Child Nutrition, Facilities and New Construction, Information Technology, Maintenance and Operations, School Security, and Transportation—the division works diligently to equip every school with the infrastructural and operational support needed to promote and preserve effective classroom instruction.

During the 2023-24 school year, the division made significant and intentional strides toward modernizing the district’s existing infrastructure by:

- Completing a comprehensive facility assessment;
- Addressing overcrowding in Farragut schools;
- Navigating bus driver shortages; and
- Bolstering school safety.

## ASSESSING FACILITIES

KCS manages and maintains more than 10.8 million square feet of property in the form of school campuses across the district. For decades, the Maintenance and Facilities Departments have dutifully maintained heating and air units, roofing, piping, and more to provide for the seamless operation of schools throughout the school year—this includes responding to upwards of 40,000 work orders a year. As is the case with most large organizations, it had been years since KCS conducted a thorough review of its data management systems. That changed two years ago.

“We have detailed records on everything you could ever need to know about our facilities,” Dr. Adams explained. “But most of those reports are still in binders. It was time for us to digitize.”

That is precisely what the team did. In 2023, the district secured a contract with Roth IAM to conduct a comprehensive assessment of every KCS facility, cataloguing everything from fire safety systems to building capacity to accessibility to technology. This year, that data will be loaded into an electronic platform to provide real-time, actionable insights into the state of our schools. “This is just the beginning,” Dr. Adams added, “The next step is putting the results of the assessment to good use.”



**DR. GARFIELD ADAMS**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
OF OPERATIONS

### Departments

- Asset Management
- Child Nutrition
- Facilities and New Construction
- Information Technology
- Maintenance and Operations
- Security
- Transportation

## FARRAGUT PROPERTY ACQUISITION

In response to overcrowding and traffic concerns at Farragut schools, KCS secured funding in the FY22 Capital Plan to build a new school in the Farragut community. This decision followed a feasibility study, funded in FY21, which determined that adding on to existing facilities would be cost-prohibitive and structurally impractical.

In October 2023, KCS acquired 41 acres for \$4.9 million—\$50,000 less per acre than originally listed. Later that month, KCS looked to the community to inform development and find a **whole community solution** to address overcrowding and traffic.

Three construction options were presented at public meetings attended by over 125 people whose feedback prompted the district to issue additional follow-up surveys receiving nearly 1,100 responses. What followed was the development of a fourth option—setting a new standard

for community engagement in future projects: whole community solutions.

**“The district came to the table with what we thought were three good solutions, all with their own pros and cons,”** said Dr. Adams. **“Farragut families and residents thoughtfully considered those solutions and shared constructive feedback that helped shape a fourth solution that reflected the needs and priorities of the entire community.”**

Existing Farragut Primary and Intermediate schools will be converted to K-5 schools, establishing a more effective educational environment that enhances educator collaboration and fosters cohesive learning experiences, both of which will increase student engagement and success.



## DRIVING STUDENT SUCCESS

All evidence points to high-quality educators being the strongest determinant of student success, but even the best teacher can't reach a student who isn't in class. Attendance impacts achievement—regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity.

The KCS Transportation Department works with 57 independent contractors operating 355 buses to coordinate the daily pick up—and return home—of approximately 20,000 KCS students waiting for rides at 15,000 bus stops along all routes.

## NAVIGATING THE BUS DRIVER SHORTAGE

The bus driver shortage is a national issue. “For us, the driver shortage ultimately means a longer school day for some students,” said Ryan Dillingham, Executive Director of Transportation. “Our goal is to get students to and from school safely and efficiently, but without enough drivers, students wait longer for their bus—especially in the afternoons—and school staff must adjust to ensure proper supervision until buses arrive.”

To mitigate a 30-driver shortage at the start of the school year, many drivers picked up at extra stops or ran double routes before or after school. By mid-year, student commute times had stabilized between 28 and 39 minutes.

Driving a school bus requires a Class B or C Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with both a passenger and school bus endorsement—typically required after testing with the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Transportation Department has taken intentional steps to speed up the hiring and licensure process and increase the caliber of drivers by staffing two certified CDL testers and creating its own driver training program, *Transportation U*.

**Bus drivers play a critically important role in students' lives.** They are often the first and last person a student sees each school day. Despite the driver shortage, KCS is committed to providing a safe and welcoming commute.



**BECOME A  
BUS DRIVER**

[KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/TRANSPORTATION](https://knoxschools.org/transportation)



# OPERATIONS

## SAFE SCHOOLS, SAFE STUDENTS

Students learn best in an environment that feels safe, engaging, and secure. Students and teachers spend roughly 40% of their waking hours each day at school, and how they feel during that time can profoundly impact personal achievement and school-level success.

Knox County Schools' *Safe Schools, Safe Students* initiative is a comprehensive strategy to protect the physical, digital, and emotional safety of students, staff, and visitors across the district. Its success depends on balancing building infrastructure, officer presence, crisis preparedness, response protocols, and training with mental health and support services.

In 2023, Superintendent Dr. Jon Rysewyk, alongside Assistant Superintendent of Operations Dr. Garfield Adams, the KCS Security Department, and local law enforcement, outlined three strategies to promote and maintain school safety, including:

- Staffing highly-trained, armed officers in every school;
- Taking every threat seriously and encouraging the entire community to say something if they see something; and
- Individualizing campus safety plans to meet the specific needs of each and every individual school.

**“Nothing is more important than the safety of our staff and students. We know these strategies are instrumental in safeguarding our school communities.”**

Dr. Rysewyk



With 125 armed, uniformed officers the KCS Security Department is one of the **largest law enforcement agencies in the state.**

### HIGHLY-TRAINED ARMED OFFICERS IN EVERY SCHOOL

KCS School Security Officers undergo background checks and drug testing and complete the KCS Security Department's intensive nine-week training academy program. In the academy, officers receive comprehensive security training that includes threat mitigation, assessment, and management; de-escalation and crisis intervention; active shooter emergency response; and building evacuation procedures.

Several officers have completed a 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training aimed at preparing them to address mental health crises in a manner that supports the needs of students and aligns with the values of KCS.

### SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING: TEXT-A-TIP

At the district's annual safety press conference, Superintendent Rysewyk put out a strong call to the community after announcing the district had taken steps to make it easier than ever to report safety concerns: See something, say something.

Through the new Text-A-Tip system, students, staff, parents, and community members can anonymously share information directly with the KCS Operations Center, which is monitored 24/7. A link to Text-A-Tip is already pre-loaded on every student's Chromebook, and the app is available for download through Google Play or the Apple Store.

**Over 15% of the department's officers are active duty military or veterans.**

## INDIVIDUALIZING SCHOOL SAFETY

KCS is made up of 91 preschool, elementary, middle, and high schools—and every school campus is unique. This means that school safety plans must be individually tailored to account for every distinct school environment. This includes safety, accessibility, and emergency preparedness of school buildings and grounds.

The KCS Operations Division works tirelessly to ensure that all schools and campuses—regardless of their age—are equipped to meet the highest safety standards. **More than \$2 million of the FY25 General Purpose budget will be allocated to complete districtwide upgrades to school security infrastructure during the 2024-25 school year.** Key projects included:

- Replacing locks at 43 schools to enhance overall building security and reduce reliance on traditional master keys;
- Applying ballistic film to first floor and main entrance windows at 44 schools;
- Installing 47 Emergency Radio Antenna Systems to improve communications at schools with the most significant signal degradation;
- Upgrading video surveillance systems including: camera hardware, cabling, and servers at 37 schools; and
- Installing 3.5 miles of security fencing across the district and adding barrier protection bollards at 33 schools.

While some facility upgrades, like those made to alarm systems, are standardized across the district, most upgrades are tailored to meet the unique needs of each of the district's 91 schools, with distinct facilities and specific needs. Additionally, district-required safety plans outlining safety drill requirements, building security, crisis intervention, emergency response management, and behavioral support and mental health service provisions must be equally unique.

“There is no one-size-fits-all security program,” says Dr. Adams. “Plans must be tailored to leverage strengths to address specific needs.”

Since 1995—28 years before the 2023 state law made it a requirement—Knox County Board of Education policies have mandated the districtwide development and maintenance of building-level safety plans. Plans for every school are updated and shared annually with local law enforcement agencies. Now, they're also submitted to the state's Department of Education and Department of Safety.



**TEXT-A-TIP**

[KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/TEXTATIP](https://KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/TEXTATIP)

**All officers are fully bonded as Special Deputies by the Knox County Sheriff's Office.**

# STRATEGY



**KORI LAUTNER**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
OF STRATEGY

#### Departments

- Creative Services
- Impact and Analytics
- Public Affairs
- Student and Family Supports

The mission of the KCS Strategy Division, led by Assistant Superintendent Kori Lautner, is to simplify complex challenges through the use of data, communication, stakeholder engagement, and meaningful systems and structures. In practice, the Strategy Division works to streamline processes, improve communication among stakeholders, and develop forward-thinking plans to enhance the district’s work at every level.

Lautner said of the division, “Our goal is to move beyond simple problem solving into creating long-lasting, intentional solutions aimed at driving success across every division.”

A relatively new division for KCS, the Strategy Division spent the latter half of the spring semester realigning and reimagining work to better fulfill this mission and better meet the needs of the district.

At the start of the 2023-24 school year, the division consisted of four departments: Communications; Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (REA); Enrollments and Transfers; and the Office of the Ombudsman. Mid-year, the division was reorganized to better align work and more intentionally meet district needs. Now, the Creative Services Department; Public Affairs Department; Impact and Analytics Department; and Student and Family Supports Department make up the Strategy Division.

Over the course of the 2023-24 school year, these departments focused their efforts on:

- Strengthening student and family support;
- Enhancing access to information, both within the district and across the community at large; and
- Developing a comprehensive, common-sense framework to drive strategic, continuous improvement for KCS.

## STRENGTHENING STUDENT AND FAMILY SUPPORTS

KCS is one of the nation’s largest public school systems. With more than 60,000 students, 91 schools, five regions, and more than 25 district office departments, KCS houses a wealth of resources, services, and supports for students and families. But locating and navigating these resources can be a daunting task. To address this challenge, the Strategy Division collaborated with the Student Success Division to establish a dedicated system for supporting students and families.

After months of planning, collaboration, and realignment of existing resources, the district’s first Department of Student and Family Supports was established by:

- Transitioning supervision of the Welcome Center and management of homeschool and private school enrollment records from the ELL Office and the School Culture Department, respectively, to the Student and Family Supports Department;
- Expanding the Office of the Ombudsman to include an ELL Family Liaison and the Special Education Family Liaison, a position previously housed in the Student Success Division; and
- Moving supervision of School Discipline from the Strategy Division to the Student Success Division to work alongside the School Culture Department.

Today, the Student and Family Supports Department—led by Director Tammi Campbell—encompasses the **Enrollment and Transfers Office**, an **expanded Office of the Ombudsman**, and the **KCS Welcome Center**. Together, these teams are better positioned to enhance access to district resources, assist families and students in navigating challenges, and connect them to district services and supports efficiently, intentionally, and across a wide range of languages.

“Our team is here to support students and families and serve our schools,” said Campbell. “We do intentional work every day to create a welcoming environment for all, ensuring that every child—regardless of language, culture, or background—has the opportunity to succeed.”





## ENHANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Spearheaded by the Communications Department, the Strategy Division launched three major initiatives in 2023-24 aimed at increasing transparency, improving access to information, and increasing understanding of the tremendous work taking place throughout KCS. While the district has always prioritized keeping families, staff, and the community informed, those efforts have largely relied on moment-in-time communication such as messages sent directly to families, or stories shared through a weekly newsletter or in the media.

Last year, the Communications Department expanded its work to include the production and creation of more lasting resources—the district’s first ever Annual Report and a totally revamped Budget Book—and began the process of redesigning the district website.

**“By ensuring easy access to tools, resources, and information, we empower everyone to actively engage with the district’s work,”** said Carly Harrington, Executive Director of Public Affairs. **“We also strengthen trust, foster collaboration, and build a more informed and connected community.”**

### ANNUAL REPORT

Released for the first time last year, the Annual Report—this publication—provides KCS families, staff and community members with a comprehensive review of the district’s performance, specifically regarding progress on Annual Action Plan objectives, and key district wide initiatives, offering valuable insights into the district’s priorities, goals, and achievements. Produced annually—as its title indicates—with support from every division, this report is intended to increase transparency and showcase the important work being done to improve outcomes for students.

### BUDGET BOOK

KCS has an annual operating budget of approximately \$679.3 million that consists of 7 major spending categories and more than 121 individual line items. The budget itself is more than 125 pages. For FY25, the Communications Department partnered with the Finance Department to create an introductory guide for the Budget Book that would better explain major elements of the budget; enhance awareness of KCS’s stewardship of fiscal resources; and articulate its philosophy on maximizing resources to improve student outcomes.

### DISTRICT WEBSITE

Knoxschools.org has long served as a one-stop resource for staff, families, and the community. While it provided a wealth of information, the site was difficult to navigate effectively. Last year, KCS secured a contract to redesign the website, focusing on the needs of families and community stakeholders. At the same time, in-house resources were used to begin developing an internal portal to house staff-specific information and resources. Set to launch at the end of the 2024-25 school year, both tools are designed to enhance the user experience making it easier for all audiences to access important information.

Given the scope and breadth of this work—as well as the need to maintain meaningful and ongoing moment-in-time communication throughout the year—the Communications Department was reorganized at the end of the school year into two streamlined teams: Public Affairs and Creative Services. With this new structure, the Public Affairs Department—led by Executive Director Carly Harrington—is effectively positioned to concentrate on media relations and enhance ongoing communication with families and other stakeholders, while the Creative Services Department—led by Supervisor Abbey Harris—is poised to take on creation and curation of long-lasting resources, such as the Annual Report and Budget Book.



# STRATEGY

## CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

For years, KCS—like every public school system in the state—has operated under a five-year strategic plan developed by the Knox County Board of Education, which is designed to cast a long-range vision of success for the district and includes actionable, measurable goals to improve outcomes for students.

The challenge for a district the size of KCS is making a five-year strategic plan relevant to every department and every school.

**“There are more than 9,000 people on the KCS team and everyone has an important part to play in reaching our goals,”** Lautner explained. **“The Strategic Planning Framework is a first step toward defining how every person in every position ultimately contributes to improving student outcomes.”**

The framework begins with the Board’s approved strategic plan and moves through a series of departmentalized operational and tactical plans, beginning with the district’s Annual Action Plan. Outlined on pages 14-17 of this report, the Annual Action Plan translates the Board’s five-year strategic plan into one-year objectives for the superintendent. These objectives are further distilled into specific actions and initiatives assigned to each of the district’s five divisions, which are then turned around into department-specific work for the year.

All of this work culminates in the Local Education Agency (LEA) Plan, an improvement plan that districts are required to submit to the Tennessee Department of Education each year. While districts are tasked with outlining their improvement goals for the year, principals are similarly charged with developing annual school improvement plans to submit to the state.

“Without a clear anchor at the district level, it’s easy for these plans to become a compliance exercise,” said Steve Rudder, Director of Impact and Analytics. “The strategic planning framework gives us that anchor.”

By creating a clear throughline from the strategic plan to the Annual Action Plan to the LEA Plan, the Strategy Division was able to produce an aligned menu of evidence-based strategies and supports for principals to select from when creating their school improvement plans. This change in process has ultimately streamlined school improvement planning by:

- Eliminating the need for 91 principals to independently research and generate school improvement strategies;
- Ensuring strategies selected by schools are evidenced-based and accompanied by a network of supports from the district office; and
- Exchanging the amount of time principals spend writing and researching their plans to provide for more time to engage families and educators in the development of their school improvement plans.

Although still in its first year of implementation, KCS leaders expect that continued use and refinement of the Strategic Planning Framework will, over time, foster greater consistency in the work taking place across the district while maintaining the flexibility needed to address the unique needs of each school community.



## FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Knox County Board of Education

Planning begins at the district level with a five-year strategic plan. The five-year strategic plan casts a long-term vision of success for KCS and is developed by the Knox County Board of Education.

## ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

Superintendent

The Annual Action Plan is a one-year roadmap to accelerate student learning and increase academic outcomes. This plan outlines a series of measurable and milestone objectives for a given school year.

## OPERATIONAL PLANS

Assistant Superintendents

Operational Plans detail the major initiative-level work that needs to occur to ensure the district is on track to meet its established one-year and five-year objectives.

## TACTICAL PLANS

Department Leaders

Tactical Plans are one-year development plans that detail the work each department must engage in to ensure systems and structures are in place to meet the objectives of their divisions.

## LEA PLAN

District Office

The LEA Plan outlines district-level improvement goals and details specific improvement strategies district offices will engage in to enhance systems and deploy school-level supports to accelerate learning in the classroom and increase academic outcomes.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Principals

Improvement Plans are developed by school leaders on an annual basis. Principals inherit high-level improvement goals from their region leaders and select from a menu of district support strategies to create an Improvement Plan that is responsive to the needs of their school and designed to close achievement gaps across student groups, accelerate learning, and increase academic outcomes.

Navigating such an interconnected framework requires manpower, thought-partnership, and the development of nimble systems and structures. To provide for efficient and seamless implementation, the REA Department has been restructured into the Impact and Analytics Department. This reorganization shifted resources internally to establish a dedicated Project Management team, tasked with overseeing major grants and providing project management support for districtwide initiatives and action plans. In addition to the Project Management Office, the Impact and Analytics Department includes the Research, Evaluation, and Analytics (REA) team, as well as the district's Assessments Office.



# STUDENT SUCCESS

The mission of the Student Success Division is simple: provide intentional wraparound services to remove learning barriers for students, so that every student, regardless of race, gender, or disability can succeed. The division includes the departments of Student Supports, School Discipline, School Culture, and Special Education.

In the 2023-24 school year, the Student Success Division focused their efforts on developing systems and structures to better support schools in meeting the unique needs of every student. Specifically, the division:

- Conducted a districtwide audit on Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2) to develop a comprehensive guide for how RTI will be administered in KCS;
- Leveraged feedback from the Special Education Deep Dive to develop and launch the *KCS Way for Special Education* and the *IEP Process* to calibrate district SPED practices and enhance the efficacy of the IEP team; and
- Implemented Year One strategies of the *Region 5 Way* that includes guidelines for hiring elite educators, high-quality instruction, and systems for meeting whole child needs.

Efforts are yielding results. **Since 2021, KCS has increased 3% in math proficiency and 3.7% in ELA proficiency in student groups districtwide.**

SUCCESS BY STUDENT GROUP			
Math Proficiency Rate	2022	2023	2024
Black/Hispanic/Native American	13.1%	15.7%	16.8%
Economically Disadvantaged	11.2%	12.9%	13.7%
English Language Learners	14.1%	16.5%	16.3%
Students with Disabilities	8.4%	10.5%	11.9%

ELA Proficiency Rate	2022	2023	2024
Black/Hispanic/Native American	20.4%	21.6%	21.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	17.8%	18.3%	17.5%
English Language Learners	14.9%	14.2%	13.8%
Students with Disabilities	10.2%	10.4%	11.6%



**DR. ANDREW BROWN**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Departments

- School Culture
- Special Education
- Student Discipline
- Student Supports





# THE KCS WAY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

In his first year as Superintendent, Dr. Rysewyk charged the Student Success Division with conducting a deep dive into special education services and supports across the district. This process included parent input surveys, focus groups, and the formation of a special education task force—all valuable in developing clear, actionable next steps for improvement.

One of the most immediate outcomes of this work was the establishment of the *KCS Way for Special Education*, a handbook designed to enhance the consistency of the IEP experience across schools and focus decision-making as close to the student as possible.

While each IEP remains personalized, KCS emphasizes eight core actions for IEP



KCS | KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

*Empowering Students, Individualizing Learning*

meetings, from obtaining parental permission for assessments to celebrating students' accomplishments of their goals. The handbook offers educators practical tools aimed at fostering a culture of collaboration and making IEP meetings as impactful for students and families as possible.

**“The KCS Way for Special Education is designed to increase consistency in the IEP experience,”** said Dr. Andrew Brown. **“This framework ensures every member of the IEP team understands the important role they play in equipping students with disabilities with the resources, services, and supports needed to thrive in the classroom.”**

Across the district, KCS has seen significant success in improving proficiency rates for various student groups, meeting the “Least Restrictive Environment” (LRE) goal across the

district, and leveraging the regional structure to provide increased SPED support to schools. Meeting LRE goals means students are more likely to interact with high-quality, grade-level instruction. KCS has worked to increase the percent of students that spend at least 80% of their time in general education settings to 80%—a goal directly in line with the state’s LRE benchmark.

The next phase of KCS’s continuous improvement efforts in special education will consist of working with a third party to produce a strategic plan aimed at:

- Improving achievement for students with disabilities;
- Moving more students into the general education setting; and
- Improving special education supports to keep students in their zoned schools.

## WORKING SMARTER

At the start of the 2024 school year, KCS instituted new Response to Intervention (RTI) guidelines to improve instructional coherence across the district. An internal audit of RTI practices in 2023 revealed inconsistent practices resulting in inconsistent progress for students performing below the 25th percentile in ELA and math.

To address this, KCS began with improving the materials being used.

Over 40 different intervention materials were in use across the district, so the Student Supports Department, under Director Alicia Jones, developed a map that intentionally aligns RTI materials with regular classroom materials.

Jones emphasized the importance of aligning intervention materials to regular classroom materials by saying, “Previously, students were pulled out of class for interventions that were disconnected from the topics and texts being taught in their regular classrooms. Now, interventions focus on filling gaps in knowledge or skills using materials students have already encountered.”

Elementary schools will use Benchmark Advance for ELA, middle schools will use Lexia Power Learning for ELA, and i-Ready will be used for math intervention in grades K-8.

To further strengthen support for students

requiring additional assistance, KCS introduced a mandatory 40-minute intervention block across elementary schools in the district, designed to provide targeted instruction within the regular school day. This block, initially piloted in Region 5, showed promising results: **a net increase of 2,183 students receiving three hours of additional instruction per month.**

In addition to these efforts, the Student Supports Department also produced a framework of districtwide expectations for intervention materials, instruction, and student placement. Implementation of this framework is already under way.

# STUDENT SUCCESS

Region 5 includes many of the district’s most historic schools. While schools in the region have experienced pockets of excellence, the lack of a unified vision of success for every student has resulted in inconsistent performance over the years. The 2023-24 school year marked the first year of implementation of the *Region 5 Way*—KCS’s strategic plan to close persistent achievement gaps and accelerate learning in Region 5 schools. This plan provided a clear roadmap to transforming educational outcomes for Region 5 students. The first year of implementation yielded promising progress and identified opportunities for continued improvement across the region.

The *Region 5 Way* outlines several key strategies aimed at driving Year One progress:

- **Scheduling More Time for Student Support:** School schedules now incorporate a mandatory 40-minute intervention block, ensuring all students have access to targeted interventions and high-dosage tutoring;

- **Reducing Chronic Absenteeism:** Creative solutions like the Walking School Bus at Maynard Elementary and leveraging Whole Child Support Teams helped reduce absenteeism and improve attendance across the region;
- **Academic Excellence and Support to Ensure Access to Grade-Level Instruction:** With a concentrated focus on elevating academic performance through the utilization of high-quality instructional materials, schools like Lonsdale Elementary and Holston Middle made notable gains in math proficiency, showcasing the region’s dedication to Excellence in Foundational Skills; and
- **Extending Contracts and Professional Development to Support Teacher Growth:** Teachers received extended contracts for the school year and additional time each week in the form of “Transformation Thursdays” to engage in high-quality professional development led by high-performing peers.

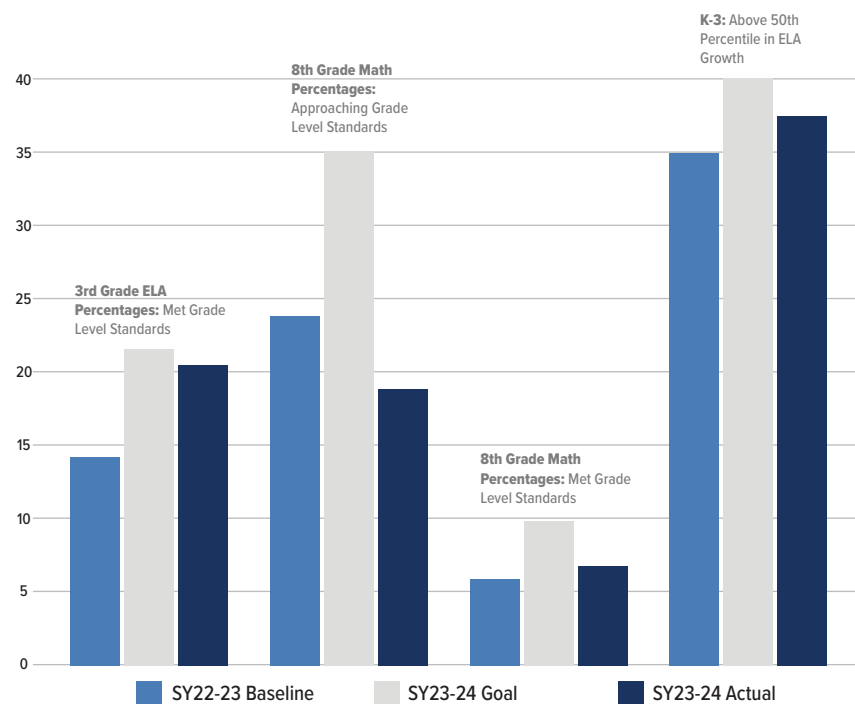
“I’m proud of the work our schools did,” Region 5 Director Dr. Dexter Murphy said. “We moved the needle for a lot of kids and we made some great gains, but we ultimately fell short of our intended objectives.” For example:

- 3rd grade reading proficiency increased to 20.6%, just short of the 22% target—representing a gap of only seven students;
- The percent of 8th grade students approaching proficiency in math fell to 19%, missing the goal of 35% by 56 students; meanwhile
- 8th grade math proficiency increased to 7%, missing the goal of 10% by 10 students; finally
- ELA growth for kindergarten through 3rd graders increased to 37.6% above the 50th percentile, missing the 40% goal by 115 students.

Despite these shortfalls, the region is already seeing evidence of early success. Math proficiency improved significantly in select schools—Lonsdale Elementary saw an increase from 8% to 14%, Holston Middle saw an increase from 17% to 21.5%. Fulton High School graduation rates rose from 79.1% to 83.6%.

Staffing strategies were another bright spot, with over 95% of schools fully staffed at the start of the year. This early progress is a testament to new resources like the Leadership Toolkit, which offers comprehensive guidance on interviewing, hiring, and leading effectively within Region 5.

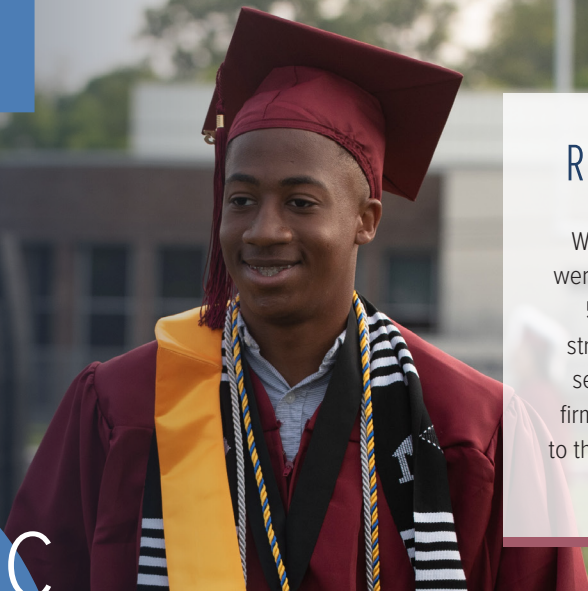
## REGION 5’s STRATEGIC PROGRESS



“By identifying exactly where we need to grow, we’ve set a clear path forward. We know what we need to do to increase momentum next year.”

Dr. Dexter Murphy

# REGION 5 STRATEGIC PROGRESS



## REGION 5: AT HOME IN ACADEMICS

With the initial regionalization of schools, Regions 1-4 were placed under the Academics Division, while Region 5 was assigned to the Student Success Division to strengthen connections between schools and support services. With critical student support structures now firmly established, oversight of Region 5 is transitioning to the Academics Division to promote greater consistency and collaboration across the district.

While Region 5 made meaningful progress in 2023-24, there is still work to be done to meet the ambitious growth goals set for students. Year One progress fell short of initial expectations, meaning the commitment to increasing academic outcomes is more urgent than ever. Equipped with this data, Region 5 educators and leaders are fully prepared to make gains in accelerating learning for students across the region.

“We know change doesn’t happen overnight,” said Dr. Murphy. “Achieving ambitious goals requires persistence, patience, and a commitment to the process of transformation.” The objectives for the 2024-25 school year remain unchanged despite the shortfall in 2023-24. The work of Year Two will be to close these gaps and meet the next set of ambitious targets.

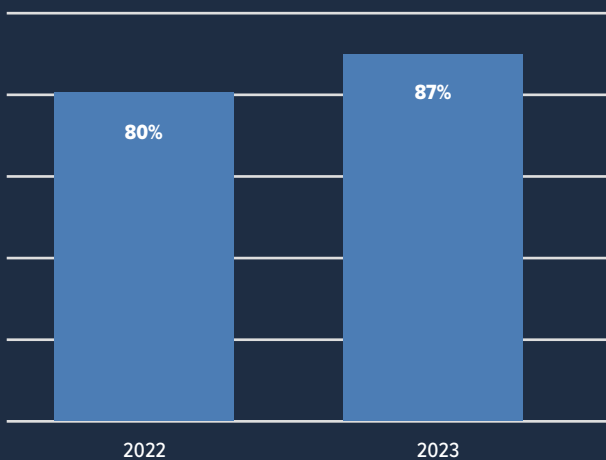
To set the stage for the upcoming year, Region 5 leadership convened the district’s first Region 5 Educator Summit. At this summer conference, educators reviewed the progress made so far and collaboratively planned for the work ahead. At this inaugural event, Dr. Murphy emphasized the importance of trusting the process: “Trusting the process isn’t just a slogan. It’s a commitment to the deliberate and sometimes challenging journey of transformation.”

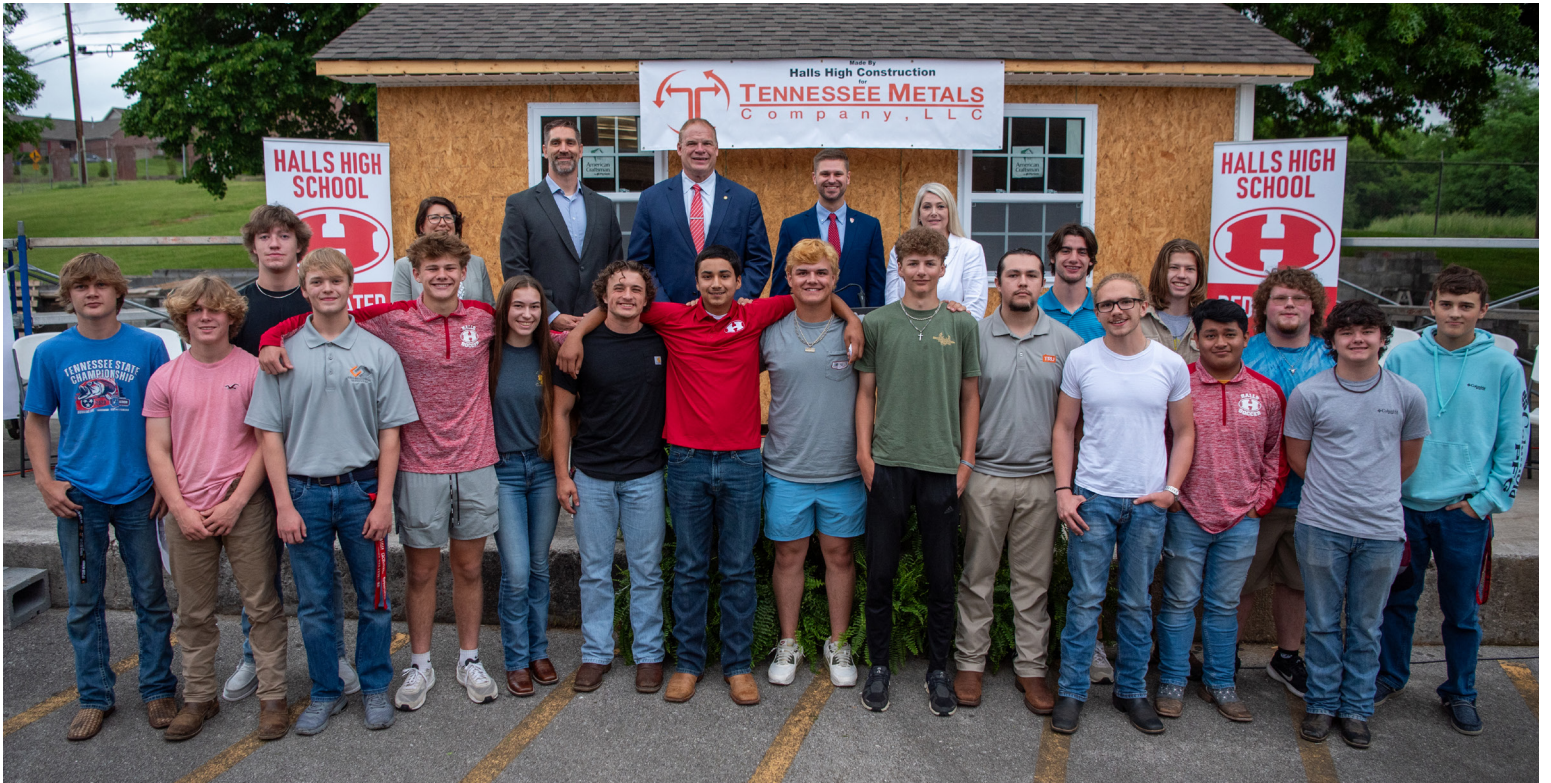
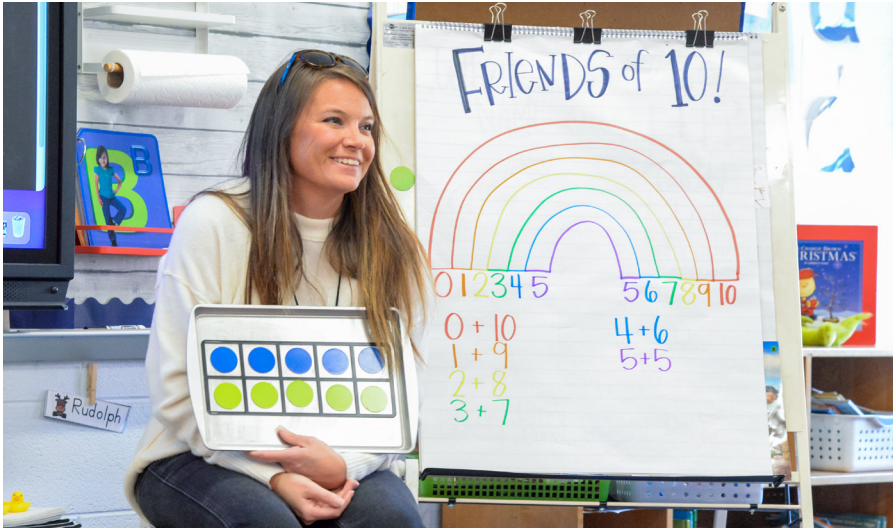
Beginning in Year Two, a core focus for educators and leaders in the region will be embracing the change that comes with growth. This includes stepping out of comfort zones to adopt innovative teaching methods, using data to inform personalized learning, and creating a culture of collaboration through professional development. By remaining focused on the strategies and objectives outlined in the Region 5 Way, every step taken in every classroom in the region will be purposefully aligned to the goal of transforming futures for students.

Dr. Rysewyk highlighted the importance of maintaining momentum, saying, “This roadmap is our commitment to assuring every student and family at our schools in Region 5 has the support needed to excel and thrive, both academically and personally.”

With a renewed focus and a clear understanding of targets, Region 5 is poised to make meaningful progress in the year ahead and achieve its ambitious goals by 2028.

**FULTON HIGH GRADUATION RATE**





# LOOKING AHEAD

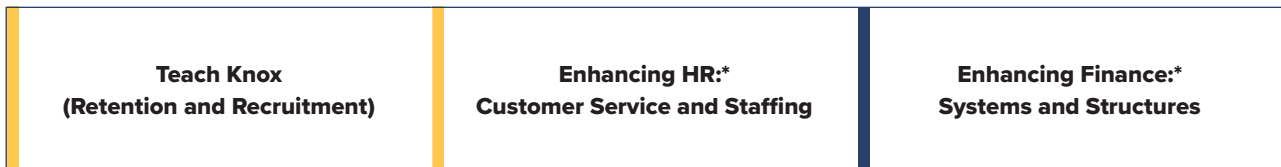
KCS is committed to preserving the district’s most meaningful traditions while identifying and pursuing opportunities to continuously improve our work on the four key priorities—**Excellence in Foundational Skills**, **Great Educators in Every School**, **Career Empowerment and Preparation**, and **Success for Every Student**. Approaching district leadership in progressively innovative ways, the district has developed and/or introduced a number of strategic initiatives since 2022. Each initiative has been cultivated to better support the acceleration of learning and improvement of outcomes for all students, is aligned to one or more priorities, and managed by a division of the district office.

Several of these initiatives are highlighted in the pages of this progress report and others will be detailed in the 2024-25 Annual Report; here, the panoramic overview provides a strong visual representation of their collective integration.

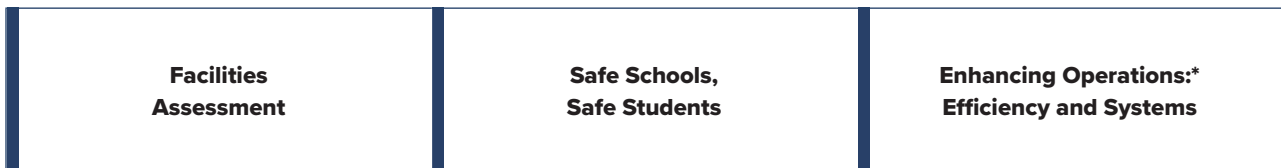
## ACADEMICS DIVISION



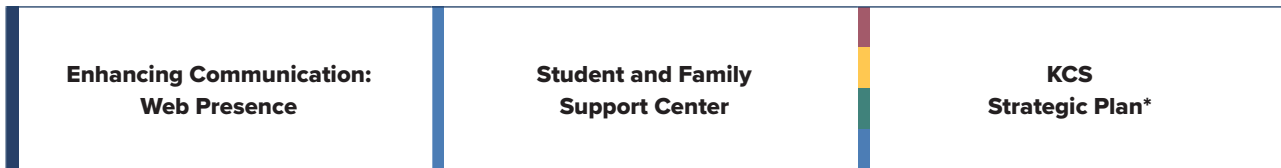
## BUSINESS AND TALENT DIVISION



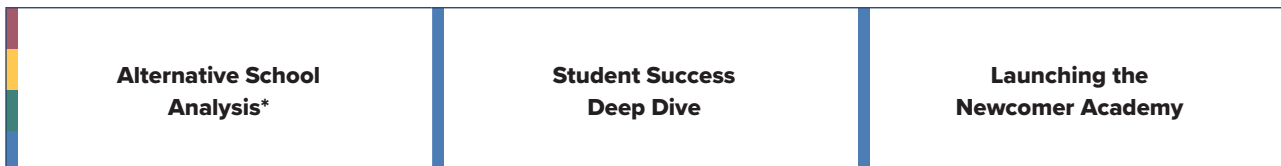
## OPERATIONS DIVISION



## STRATEGY DIVISION



## STUDENT SUCCESS DIVISION



\* Beginning 2024-25 School Year

# FY2025 BUDGET

## REVENUE: \$675.9 MILLION

The General Purpose School Fund is used to account for general operations of the district. Roughly 99% of the funding is provided through local tax levies and state education funds.

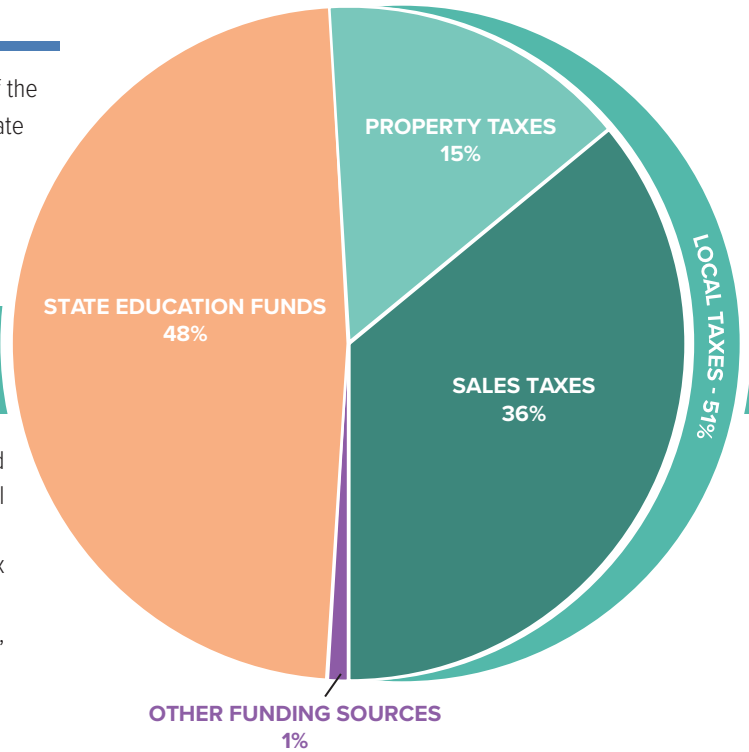
### LOCAL TAXES

**\$342.8 million (51%)**

**Sales Tax Revenue:** Approximately 72% of the local option sales tax collected in both Knox County and the City of Knoxville is allocated to the KCS General Fund. The Town of Farragut allocates 50% of its local option portion.

**Property Tax Revenue:** Approximately 33% of the Knox County Property Tax rate is allocated to the KCS General Fund.

**Other Local Revenue:** Includes portions of the wheel tax, litigation taxes, licenses and permits.



### STATE EDUCATION FUNDS

**\$326.9 million (48%)**

**TISA:** Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement funds (the State’s public education funding formula) represent the single largest source of revenue for the KCS General Fund. Allocations to K-12 districts are based on a base funding amount for each student with additional layers of funding based largely on economically disadvantaged students and students with unique learning needs.

**Other:** Miscellaneous other State revenues include mixed-drink taxes, Medicaid reimbursements, and driver education fees.

### OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

**\$6.2 million (1%)**

Includes revenue for indirect costs received from federal grants, leases and rentals, federal ROTC reimbursements, and other miscellaneous revenue.

### FEDERAL FUNDING

The majority of the \$36.1 million of federal formula grants awarded to the district for FY25 comes from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). ESEA grants — also called Title funds — provide additional resources for schools with higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, as well as English language learners, immigrant students, and those considered neglected. IDEA grants supplement services and support for students with special education needs.

### SCHOOL NUTRITION

The district’s school nutrition program operates independently from the General Fund and Capital Fund budgets. For FY25, 81% of the approved budget is federally funded through USDA reimbursements that cover free breakfasts and lunches for eligible students and meals served at no cost, regardless of family income, in schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision. Additional revenue comes from the purchase of breakfast and lunch meals by students and staff across the district.

# GENERAL PURPOSE BUDGET

Traditionally, KCS budgets have followed a “percentage add-on” approach—using the previous year’s budget as a baseline and **adding** funds as needed for new initiatives, positions, and resources. Considering funding adjustments at the local, state, and federal levels, FY25 required a different strategy—**asking** what expenses are necessary and justified. The FY25 budget was strategically developed from the ground up—starting from zero.

“This is asking versus adding,” said Dr. Rysewyk. “It’s not an incremental increase of last year’s expenses. It’s a critical evaluation followed by a justification for spending that money in the same way this year.”

Assistant Superintendents and department leaders reviewed FY24 expenditures by asking the following:

- What worked?
- Were related expenses priority aligned?
- What need was met?

The answers helped determine where adjustments or reallocations would be appropriate and that everything else was essential to the mission of preparing every student for success in college, the workforce, or military service. The result? An intentional, student-focused, results-driven budget that identified \$37.8 million for reallocation—\$14 million to support salary enhancements and important district initiatives and \$23.8 million to fund one-time capital expenditures in FY24.

## FY25 BUDGET PRIORITIES

**Great Educators in Every School:** The dedicated professionals working in KCS schools and administrative offices are the most impactful contributors to the district’s success. To ensure competitive compensation, the FY25 budget allocated over \$41 million in salary enhancements and benefits, ensuring that every employee is paid a market-value wage.

**Success for Every Student:** Recognizing that each student has unique needs, the district committed \$9.8 million to establish the Newcomer Academy for non-English-speaking students and families, while also funding 47 additional English Language Learner (ELL) positions and 67 Special Education Assistant roles. These investments support the individualized interventions and resources necessary to meet the needs of our most vulnerable students.

**Excellence in Foundational Skills:** To enhance student learning, \$3.4 million was invested to fund elementary literacy tutoring and purchase Mastery Connect, digital assessment management system software designed to support data-driven instruction and accelerate student learning.

**Career Empowerment and Preparation:** With a \$2 million investment, KCS continues to fund district-level lead counselors and an 865 Academy Coach at each high school, ensuring students receive the guidance and support needed to successfully navigate and benefit from the academies at district high schools.

## KEY FY25 BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendations from the district’s salary schedule study resulted in the single biggest personnel investment KCS has ever made—\$39 million to increase the salary of every employee and \$2 million for benefits.

Changes to the BEP and TISA in FY24 resulted in an unprecedented 26% increase in state funding. The increase in FY25 was significantly lower at 3.5%.

The \$178 million of ESSER funding provided to the district beginning in FY2021 was committed primarily towards strategic personnel, classroom technology, and infrastructure investments.



Knox County Schools spends an average of **\$11,565** per student to nurture vibrant learning environments where every child can reach their full potential.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The work of Knox County Schools is enhanced by the insights of community members and leaders—but that essential feedback doesn't happen without a framework for intentional engagement.

“We have made a conscious effort to ensure there are multiple pathways for community voices to be heard, and many distinct channels for consistent, two-way communication,” said Dr. Rysewyk.

The structure of these pathways helps to catalyze different kinds of feedback. Some are organized by geography and community, others are focused on roles and competencies – and some account for both. Ultimately, the goal is to cast a wide net that captures diverse perspectives, while also generating insights that are targeted to specific challenges and stakeholders.



**LEARN HOW TO GET INVOLVED**

[KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/GETINVOLVED](https://knoxschools.org/getinvolved)

## DISTRICTWIDE ENGAGEMENT

In order to shape policy- and decision-making at the district level, three advisory groups have been created:

- The **Council on Accelerating Student Learning (CASL)** brings together business, community, non-profit, and postsecondary leaders, along with parents, teachers, and school administrators to recommend improvements to, champion and advocate for, and inform the work of Knox County Schools' four priorities. By engaging with resident experts on priority-aligned projects to accelerate learning, CASL ensures that KCS is taking a 360-degree view as we help students build momentum in their academic journey.
- Principals set the tone when it comes to a school's culture, and their role as curricular and instructional leaders is equally significant. **Principal Division Councils** convene groups of school leaders to serve as thought partners and provide feedback that is specific to the district's five flagship divisions: Academics; Business and Talent; Operations; Strategy; and Student Success. This structure ensures that district decision-making is informed by leaders with direct visibility into how those decisions play out in schools and classrooms.
- One of KCS's commitments is to provide high-school students with work-based experiences that help them discern a clear pathway to success after graduation—whether they plan to enroll in college, enlist in service, or seek high-wage employment. The **CEO Champions** group includes respected business and community leaders who offer candid perspectives on critical workforce issues—and help ensure that classroom instruction is aligned with the skills and capabilities students will need after high school.

## REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

KCS offers excellent instruction, robust supports, and high expectations in the rural, urban, and suburban communities that we serve—but we also recognize that each community has its own set of unique needs and challenges.

With that in mind, regional councils have been created to gather feedback and insights tailored to each community—and solutions that account for their diverse needs.

Regional Teacher Councils include educators from schools within the region who provide important feedback about classroom-level implementation of policies and procedures.

Regional Family Councils are made up of parents and guardians of current KCS students who provide insight and feedback about issues that impact communities, schools, and students.

Taken together, these councils play an important role in building processes from the ground up, and reflecting the unique character of each region.

## SCHOOL-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

We know the most important work in any district happens as close to the school as possible, and that's also true for community engagement. KCS is grateful for the school-based organizations and volunteers that serve students and teachers across Knox County. By identifying opportunities for support and mobilizing resources at the local level, these organizations play a vital role in addressing specific needs, fostering collaboration, and enhancing the educational experience for all students. Their commitment and efforts help create a stronger, more responsive school community.

Families are encouraged to visit their school's website for specific offerings that are available at each school, and to learn how you can get involved.





## EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

*Deploying a community-wide marketing campaign defining 'kindergarten readiness' for children under five and providing parents/ caregivers information on how to best prepare new learners for the classroom.*

KCS recognized that families not yet connected with district schools were struggling to find clear information on how and where to register their children for Pre-K. CASL focused on broader outreach, more family-friendly communication, and simplifying access to information and resources. As a result, key registration documents were translated into several languages and a community-wide marketing campaign was crafted around 'kindergarten readiness.'



## GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL

*Identifying opportunities and innovative approaches to increase investments in and retention of teachers while improving educator experiences districtwide.*

District and school leaders are actively investing in people, strengthening the educator pipeline, increasing teacher retention, and enhancing the teaching experience. With the completion of the salary study, the establishment of the Talent Acquisition Department, and the formation of the Business & Talent Division Council, CASL found KCS is poised to become a national leader in the Business and Talent space.



## CAREER EMPOWERMENT AND PREPARATION

*Crafting a plan that communicates a district vision outlining strategies to support career empowerment and preparation in every grade.*

Although established processes are in place to provide essential career exploration experiences for high school students enrolled in the 865 Academies, CASL is focused on creating a guiding framework that supports efforts to enhance the overall effectiveness of the education system across all grade bands in preparing the future workforce.



## SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

*Developing a data-driven early warning system aimed at identifying students at risk of chronic absenteeism and enabling the timely deployment of necessary support interventions.*

CASL redefined and narrowed the scope of chronic absenteeism to focus on high-impact absenteeism, specifically absenteeism that leads to low academic achievement. The group also prioritized understanding the types of absenteeism occurring across the district, identifying the underlying causes, and assessing whether any of these factors could be influenced by the school.

Knox County Schools **PROUDLY PARTNERS** with these outstanding organizations, whose unwavering commitment to students helps shape brighter futures and strengthen the community.



As the economic development organization for Knox County and the City of Knoxville, the Knoxville Chamber is committed to driving regional economic prosperity. The Chamber actively engages the business community with the mission of the 865 Academies, ensuring that students are equipped to work in high-demand careers and support the region's future workforce needs.



The mission of Knox Education Foundation is to be a catalyst for the transformation of public education by investing in and advocating for innovative programs, partnerships, and initiatives to achieve excellent outcomes for all students. As the funding and convening partner of the 865 Academies, KEF played a crucial role in catalyzing and championing the initiative, and is still actively working to connect community partners with schools.



The goal of the Partners in Education Foundation (PIE) is to help community leaders and businesses establish relationships with individual schools or the district as a whole with the intention of enriching and expanding educational opportunities for students while inviting the community to take a share in educating the future of Knox County.



The Community Schools Initiative is a strategic partnership between Knox County Schools, United Way, and many other community partners that use public schools as a hub for organizing community resources to improve neighborhood health and safety and student academic success. Ultimately, community schools aim to enhance student learning and serve as a catalyst to achieve healthy communities, with schools at the center.



# THANK YOU

Community engagement is essential to the success of public schools, as it fosters collaboration, strengthens relationships, and enriches the learning environment. When families, businesses, and community members are actively involved, students thrive, and schools become vibrant centers of support and opportunity.

## REGION 1

### REGIONAL FAMILY COUNCIL

Megan Burton, A. L. Lotts Elementary  
Miller Foutch, Bearden Elementary  
Heather Casciano, Bearden High  
Holly Williams, Bearden Middle  
Sheena Musinovic, Blue Grass Elementary  
Wendy Edwards, Farragut High  
Courtney Childers, Farragut Intermediate  
Stephanie Thompson, Farragut Middle  
Gitashree Goswami, Farragut Primary  
Brittany Ford, Northshore Elementary

Kristopher Ross, Pond Gap Elementary  
Olivia Parton, Rocky Hill Elementary  
Jonathan Fortner, Sequoyah Elementary  
Jessica Legg, West High  
Amanda Paletz, West Hills Elementary  
Rochelle Mayes, West Valley Middle  
Esmeralda Contreras, West View Elementary  
James Ervin, At Large  
Wade Husley, At Large

### REGIONAL TEACHER COUNCIL

Sarah Daves, A. L. Lotts Elementary  
Taylor Sexton, Bearden Elementary  
Logan Peterson, Bearden High  
Brett Coleman, Bearden Middle  
Cheryl Triko, Blue Grass Elementary  
Susan Bothman, Farragut High  
Ann Riddell, Farragut Intermediate  
Meredith Ginn, Farragut Primary  
Ali Thompson, Northshore Elementary  
Macy Mitchell, Pond Gap Elementary

Shelley Hill, Rocky Hill Elementary  
Alethea Goodman, Sequoyah Elementary  
Bryan Powers, West High  
Kelly Boyd, West Hills Elementary  
Amanda Varnes, West Valley Middle  
Christi Rice, West View Elementary  
Emily Abeles, At Large  
Albert Fontenot, At Large  
Steven Jones, At Large  
David Krebs, At Large

## REGION 2

### REGIONAL FAMILY COUNCIL

Holly White, Amherst Elementary  
Ashlee Smethers, Ball Camp Elementary  
Sarah Stamp, Cedar Bluff Elementary  
Nikki Baker, Cedar Bluff Middle  
Bethany McCarthy-Franklin, Cedar Bluff Preschool  
Danielle Choi, Hardin Valley Academy  
Beth Braden, Hardin Valley Elementary  
Galya Micek, Karns Elementary  
Johnny Coffey, Karns High  
Shawna Krugjohann, Karns Middle

Jena Webb, Karns Preschool  
Rick Hunley, Knox County Virtual  
Laura Pickens, Mill Creek Elementary  
Jasmyn Davis, Norwood Elementary  
Cassy Guzzo, Pleasant Ridge Elementary  
Allison Malone, Powell Elementary  
Brian Lanius, Powell High  
Brian Lanius, Powell Middle  
Sylvia Miller, West Haven Elementary

### REGIONAL TEACHER COUNCIL

Alex Roushdi, Amherst Elementary  
Jennifer Manges, Ball Camp Elementary  
Laurie Smith, Cedar Bluff Elementary  
Dave Gorman, Cedar Bluff Middle  
Molly Schmitt, Cedar Bluff Preschool  
Chelsea Gillis, Hardin Valley Elementary  
Amanda Danson, Hardin Valley Academy  
Michele Abbot, Hardin Valley Middle  
Tarah Karczewski, Karns Elementary  
Jordyn Horner, Karns Middle  
Renee Sellers, Karns Preschool

David Newwine, Knox County Virtual  
Kimberly McFall, Mill Creek Elementary  
Aly Carpenter, Northwest Middle  
Lacey Sharp-Reed, Norwood Elementary  
Daria Turner, Pleasant Ridge Elementary  
Kristi Radocesky, Powell High  
Cristina Simpson, Powell Middle  
Cynthia Coley, West Haven Elementary  
Jenna Darnbush, At Large  
Al Feldblum, At Large  
Tarah Karczewski, Karns Elementary  
Jordyn Horner, Karns Middle  
Renee Sellers, Karns Preschool

## REGION 3

### REGIONAL FAMILY COUNCIL

Megan Newpher, Bonny Kate Elementary  
Keith Lindsey, Career Magnet Academy  
Maraya Jones, Carter Elementary  
Brandi Wise, Carter High  
Heather Middlebrooks, Chilhowee Intermediate  
Kara Finger, Dogwood Elementary  
Shawn Parsons, East Knox County Elementary  
Brooke Dunewood, Gap Creek Elementary  
Kaitie Vandyke, L&N STEM Academy  
Carrie Grey, Mooreland Heights Elementary  
Andrew Schoenecker, Mount Olive Elementary

Jill Maples, New Hopewell Elementary  
Jeremy Cecil, South-Doyle High  
Jason McLemore, South-Doyle Middle  
Jamie Smith, South Knoxville Elementary  
Anne Williamson, Sunnyview Primary  
Brandy Pressley, At Large  
Elizabeth Flatford, At Large  
Jessie Bell, At Large

### REGIONAL TEACHER COUNCIL

Lauren Fevrier, Bonny Kate Elementary  
Jill Shinlever, Career Magnet Academy  
Leigha Rudd, Carter Elementary  
Casey Brooks, Carter High  
Jason France, Carter Middle  
Megan Grauer, Chilhowee Intermediate  
Katherine Chollman, Dogwood Elementary  
Kari Armstrong, East Knox County Elementary  
Rebecca Ratledge, Gap Creek Elementary  
Beth Sewell, Kelley Volunteer Academy  
Stephen Blythe, L&N STEM Academy

Christina Chapman, Mooreland Heights Elementary  
Stacy Davis, Mount Olive Elementary  
Amy Chester, New Hopewell Elementary  
Daniel Owen, South-Doyle High  
Mandy McNeely, South-Doyle Middle  
Jennifer Bowes, South Knoxville Elementary  
Emily Lewis, Sunnyview Primary  
Jennifer Bowers, At Large  
Laurie Griffin, At Large  
James Piper, At Large

## REGION 4

### REGIONAL FAMILY COUNCIL

Heather West, Adrian Burnett Elementary  
Mindy Liticker, Brickley McCloud Elementary  
Daniela Laws, Central High  
Jessica Brier, Copper Ridge Elementary  
Trevor Collins, Corryton Elementary  
Nita Sexton, Fountain City Elementary  
Alexandria Shope, Fort Sanders  
Matthew Gent, Gibbs Elementary  
Lori Turner, Gibbs High  
Amber Foster, Gibbs Middle  
Jessica Buttram, Gresham Middle  
Sarah Fuson, Halls Elementary

Allison Oaks, Halls High  
Michael Lett, Halls Middle  
Ruby Wood, Inskip Elementary  
Traci Greene, Ridgedale  
Talesha Littlejohn, Ritta Elementary  
Karla Johnson, Shannondale Elementary  
Britt Ewart, Sterchi Elementary  
Terrence Lyons, At Large  
Charles Waller, At Large

### REGIONAL TEACHER COUNCIL

Leanne Butler, Adrian Burnett Elementary  
Kristen Adams, Brickley McCloud Elementary  
Andrea Menendez, Central High  
Melanie Peterson, Copper Ridge Elementary  
Melissa Biggs, Corryton Elementary  
Sherry Sakhleh, Fountain City Elementary  
Nathalie Murphy, Fort Sanders  
Qwynn White, Gibbs Elementary  
Jennifer Williams, Gibbs High  
Beverly West, Gibbs Middle  
David Dial, Gresham Middle  
Alyssa Lane, Halls Elementary  
Michael Kerr, Halls High

Avery Padgett, Halls Middle  
Amber French, Inskip Elementary  
Mac Pickle, K.A.E.C.  
Heather Kinneer, Richard Yoakley  
Kim Hawkins, Ridgedale  
Rachel Daugherty, Ritta Elementary  
Heather McFall, Shannondale Elementary  
Heather Pressley, Sterchi Elementary  
Lauren Cordova, At Large  
Mark Jones, At Large  
Charles Livesay, At Large  
Leslie West, At Large  
Amy Wyatt, At Large

## REGION 5

### REGIONAL FAMILY COUNCIL

Breyana Holloway, Austin-East Magnet High  
Brittonya Sparks, Austin-East Magnet High  
Eric Minton, Beaumont Magnet Academy  
Ashley Piburn, Beaumont Magnet Academy  
Jennifer Rose, Beaumont Magnet Academy  
Amber Fear, Belle Morris Elementary  
Sara Macfarlane, Christenberry Elementary  
Shawn Richmond, Fulton High  
Lekisha Pennington, Green Magnet Academy  
Erin Keck, Holston Middle  
Brittney Womack, Holston Middle

Proche Wynn, Holston Middle  
Angel Bowman, Lonsdale Elementary  
Katelyn McLaughlin, Maynard Elementary  
Iesha Tucker, Maynard Elementary  
Tiffany Kyle, Sarah Moore Greene Magnet  
Jennifer Reddell, Sarah Moore Greene Magnet  
Connie Bucholz, Spring Hill Elementary  
Sydney Ussey, Spring Hill Elementary  
Sheena Lundy, Vine Middle Magnet  
Jennifer Reddell, Vine Middle Magnet  
Angel Bowman, Whittle Springs Middle

### REGIONAL TEACHER COUNCIL

Skikila Smith, Austin-East Magnet High  
Sarah Alvarez, Beaumont Magnet Academy  
Olivia Cates, Belle Morris Elementary  
Leslie Sayers, Belle Morris Elementary  
Ashley Swaney, Belle Morris Elementary  
Tiffany Andrews, Christenberry Elementary  
Michele Genova, Christenberry Elementary  
Laura Brugman, Fulton High  
Paris Hoover, Fulton High  
Brandon O'Neill, Fulton High  
Jaime Ogle, Green Magnet Academy

Valerie Bachman, Holston Middle  
Anjelica Nichols, Holston Middle  
Billy Roach, Holston Middle  
Carole Crisp, Lonsdale Elementary  
Morgan Hatcher, Lonsdale Elementary  
MacKenzie Kinney, Lonsdale Elementary  
Anitra Selmon, Maynard Elementary  
Lucille Wheaton, Maynard Elementary  
Jessica Stacy, Sarah Moore Greene Magnet  
Jasmine Riggins, Spring Hill Elementary  
Adam Wilburn, Vine Middle Magnet  
Marc Ross, Whittle Springs Middle

## DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT COUNCILS

### COUNCIL ON ACCELERATING STUDENT LEARNING

Dr. John Bartlett, Farragut High School  
Tomma Battle, Region 5 Family Member  
Matthew Best, Change Center  
Sam Brown, NAACP  
Brandon Bruce, Techstars  
Claudia Caballero, Centro Hispano  
Dr. David Cihak, University of Tennessee,  
Knoxville - College of Education, Health, and  
Human Sciences  
Jay Cobble, Providence Commercial Real Estate  
Sharon Davis, 4-H  
Krissy DeAlejandro, tnAchieves  
Allie Dempsey, Farragut Middle School  
Jim Dickson, YMCA  
Steve Diggs, Emerald Youth Foundation  
Kristin Elliot, KCS Parent  
Brian Ferguson, EG America  
Sasha Foust, Region 4 Family Member  
Melissa Glover, Gresham Middle School  
Angie Goethert, Region 2 Family Member  
Dr. Jody Goins, Lincoln Memorial University  
Paula Hancock, KCEA  
Melody Hawkins, Austin-East Magnet High  
Vincent Jones, Tabernacle Missionary Baptist  
Beth Killen, TN Plumbing Heating & Cooling  
Contractors  
Kori Lautner, Knox County Schools  
Nancy McBee, Trane Energy  
Jeff McMurray, Halls High School  
Janet Morgan, Region 1 Family Member  
Chris Parrott, FirstBank  
Crystal Pennell, Mount Olive Elementary  
Dr. Sharon Roberts, SCORE  
Adrian Rucker, Knox County Schools  
Frances Vineyard, Region 3 Family Member  
Dr. Marianne Wanamaker, University of  
Tennessee, Knoxville - Baker Center  
Dr. Patty Weaver, Pellissippi State Community  
College  
Andy White, Toyota/Lexus Knoxville  
Caleb Whitworth, Karns High School  
Kristi Woods, East Knox County Elementary

### SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Tim Buss  
Will Edwards  
Betsy Gill  
Stacy Grayson  
Darlene Lapman  
Codou Samba  
Quannah Washington

### SPECIAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

Cary Byrge  
Will Edwards  
Cortney Piper  
Mattie Trimble

### CEO CHAMPIONS

Gabriel Bolas, Knoxville Utilities Board  
Kelli Chaney, Tennessee College of Applied  
Technology - Knoxville  
Dr. Keith Gray, UT Medical Center  
Betsy Henderson, Knox County Board of Education  
Lt. Colonel Travers Hurst, 134<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing  
Glenn Jacobs, Knox County  
Dylan P. Jones, Boldsquare  
Parinda Khatri, Cherokee Health Systems  
Indya Kincannon, City of Knoxville  
Matthew Kittrell, CGI  
Charles Lomax, Knoxville Area Urban League  
Bart McFadden, Boys & Girls Clubs of the  
Tennessee Valley  
Bridgett McMahan, BESCO  
Lisa New, Zoo Knoxville  
Mike Odom, Knoxville Chamber of Commerce  
Dr. Donde Plowman, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Matt Ryerson, United Way of Greater Knoxville  
Dr. Jon Rysewyk, Knox County Schools  
Matt C. Schaefer, East Tennessee Children's Hospital  
Rob Stivers, Regions Bank  
Wes Stowers, Stowers Machinery Corporation  
Mike Taylor, Knox Education Foundation  
Jim VanderSteege, Covenant Health  
Erin Wakefield, The Wakefield Corporation  
Ron Williams, Town of Farragut  
Dr. Anthony Wise, Pellissippi State Community  
College

### 865 ACADEMIES STEERING COMMITTEE

Rev. Dr. John Butler, Knox County Board of Education  
Tanisha Baker, Knoxville Utilities Board  
Katherine Banner, Clayton Homes  
Gregg Bostick, Tennessee Small Business  
Development Center  
Lauren Butler, DeRoyal  
Windy Clayton, Knox Education Foundation  
Alfonso Cruz, Qivira Group  
Krissy DeAlejandro, tnAchieves  
Courtney Durrett, Knox County Commission  
Amanda Edsell, Farragut High  
Laicee Hatfield, Karns High  
Gordon Heins, A.G. Heins  
Christine Horwege, CGI  
Shannon Jackson, Knox County Schools  
Dr. Polly Johnson, Boys & Girls Clubs of the  
Tennessee Valley  
Ellie Kittrell, United Way of Greater Knoxville  
Lauren Longmire, Knoxville Chamber  
Kathy Mack, YWCA  
Matt Mosley, Knox County Schools  
Lisa New, Zoo Knoxville  
Laura Overstreet, TN Small Business  
Development Center  
Sally Porter, Tennessee College of Applied  
Technology - Knoxville  
Ed Rottman, Stowers Machinery Corporation  
Josh Sanderson, Smithbilt Homes  
Jennifer Searle, City of Knoxville  
Rhonda Smithson, Knox County  
Liz Thacker, Knox Education Foundation  
Kristin Waldschlager, CNS/Y-12  
Dr. Patty Weaver, Pellissippi State Community  
College  
Dr. Keith Wilson, Knox County Schools  
Mark Wittschen, Regions Bank

## DIVISION LEADERSHIP COUNCILS

### ACADEMICS

Dr. Debbie Sayers, Bearden High  
Dr. Charlene Lewis, Career Magnet Academy  
Kristi Woods, East Knox County Elementary  
Tara Howell-Spikes, Fair Garden Family Center  
Seth Smith, Fulton High  
Brent Glenn, Karns Middle  
Dr. Tanna Nicely, South Knox Elementary  
Jessica Doran, Sterchi Elementary

### BUSINESS AND TALENT

Tracy Marsh, A. L. Lotts Elementary  
Michael Toth, Bearden Middle  
Ashley Booher, Cedar Bluff Elementary  
Keith Cottrell, Fountain City Elementary  
Jessica Holman, Green Magnet Academy  
Spencer Long, Halls High  
Shay Siler, Sequoyah Elementary

### OPERATIONS

Stephanie Prince, Adrian Burnett Elementary  
Rocky Riley, Bonny Kate Elementary  
Lynn White, Farragut Primary  
Jason Webster, Gibbs High  
Dr. Cory Smith, Hardin Valley Middle  
Dr. Chad Smith, Powell High  
Daniel Champion, Whittle Springs Middle

### STRATEGY

Trina Spista, Amherst Elementary  
Desiree Jones, Cedar Bluff Middle  
Suzanne Parham, Farragut Intermediate School  
Nathan Lynn, Halls Elementary  
Katie Lutton, Holston Middle  
Laicee Hatfield, Karns High  
Jimm Allen, L&N STEM Academy  
Anthony Norris, South-Doyle Middle

### STUDENT SUCCESS

David Guyer, Belle Morris Elementary  
Dr. Casey Cutter, Blue Grass Elementary  
Susan Hutton, Brickey McCloud Elementary  
Dr. Danielle Rutig, Central High  
Jessica Schaefer Ruiz, Ft. Sanders  
James Slay, Gap Creek Elementary  
Jessica Strickland, Halls Middle  
Jamey Romig, Karns Elementary  
Kristen Jackson, West Hills Elementary



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Grow lifelong learners who contribute their talents, strengths, and skills to build a stronger community.

## MISSION

Provide excellent, accessible learning opportunities that empower all students to realize their full potential.



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