



# KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION 2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**The Knox County Board of Education has identified the following legislative priorities for 2023:**

## LOCAL CONTROL

Local boards of education are best equipped and informed to make decisions regarding the needs and challenges of their local schools. The Knox County Board of Education urges State legislative bodies and regulatory agencies to seek input from local boards and to determine the full impact on LEAs before acting on proposed legislation, regulations, and guidelines.

## ACADEMIC AND RETENTION DECISIONS

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to allow districts to make retention decisions based on appropriate district data:

- The Board urges the General Assembly to amend T.C.A. § 49-6-3115 to allow districts to make retention decisions for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students based on district information on each student which could impact individual students, including, but not limited to, special education and ELL issues.
- Decisions regarding student retention or promotion must be made by the professional staff of each LEA in coordination with the student's parents/guardians by considering the unique educational needs of each student, including, but not limited to the following:
  1. The student's ability to perform at the expectations of the current grade-level standards;
  2. The results of local assessments, screening, and/or monitoring tools;
  3. State assessments, as applicable;
  4. The overall academic achievement of the student;
  5. The student's likelihood of success with more difficult material if promoted to the next grade;
  6. The student's attendance record; and
  7. The student's social and emotional maturity.

Districts must continue to have flexibility to adopt instructional and supplemental materials in partnership with teachers and with families, including appropriate, evidence-based teacher training and materials for reading and foundational literacy instruction and skills.

## **TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)**

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to allow LEAs to use TANF funds for costs related to funding programs that support social services.

## **TISA/Funding**

The Knox County Board of Education appreciates our legislators' recent attention to funding needs and urges the General Assembly to ensure TISA includes:

- Continued investments in School Nurses, Counselors, Social Workers, and Mental Health Professionals.
- Funding for Teacher Salaries equal to the number each school is required to employ to meet student-teacher ratios.
- Full funding for a School Security Officer (SSO) in every school.
- Full funding for RTI<sup>2</sup> positions within school districts.
- Increased funding for support staff, such as custodians and teaching assistants.

TISA rules must ensure districts receive no less than they would under the previous formula.

## **TEACHER EVALUATION**

The Knox County Board of Education embraces evaluations as a critical professional development and instructional improvement tool. The Board urges the General Assembly and State Board to develop guidelines and criteria for teacher evaluation models using local educator input and multiple measures that adequately represent performance and course content, including the use of benchmark assessments as an evaluation component.

## **STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to provide incentives for individuals to enter the teaching profession, such as:

- Fund PRAXIS tests for teacher candidates and for those adding endorsements.
- Increase licensure flexibility, especially for experienced teachers from other states.

## **REVIEW AND CORRECT UNNECESSARY REQUIREMENTS**

The Knox County Board of Education urges the Governor, General Assembly, and State Board of Education to establish a comprehensive, collaborative, and thoughtful review of Tennessee laws, rules, regulations, and policies governing teachers and to make improvements that will reduce workloads to facilitate teacher focus on the mission of educating Tennessee's children.

Processes, procedures, reporting, and burdensome data collection should be streamlined and simplified (or eliminated, when possible) to allow more time for teaching and learning.

## **The Knox County Board of Education appreciates and supports:**

### **PARENTAL TRANSPARENCY**

Parents are best equipped and informed to know their children and make decisions regarding their needs and challenges. The Knox County Board of Education supports the efforts of the State legislative bodies to clarify the rights and empower parents in their child's education.

### **LITERACY INSTRUCTION**

The Knox County Board of Education believes that phonics is fundamental for children to learn to read. The Knox County Board of Education urges the State legislative bodies to continue to support the science of reading through teacher trainings and materials for literacy instruction. The science of reading is defined as a body of research that incorporates insights and research from disciplines that include developmental psychology, educational psychology, cognitive science, and cognitive neuroscience. The science of reading has demonstrated the methods that best help children to learn to read, from the earliest steps in spoken language to being able to successfully decode unfamiliar words.

### **SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS**

We support the legislature's efforts to protect women's sports, ensuring that young women in Knox County have the opportunity to compete and succeed.

### **AGE-APPROPRIATE MATERIALS IN CLASSROOMS**

We support the legislature's effort to prohibit explicit content from elementary school libraries to protect young children and ensure parental rights.