



Knox County Board of Education Knox County Commission

2016 Legislative Priorities

The Knox County Board of Education and the Knox County Commission have identified the following legislative priorities:

Focus on Implementation

With higher academic standards, innovative instructional initiatives, and intensive accountability, Tennessee has become a national leader in public education reform. To maintain this leadership position, and accelerate our achievements, educators must now be provided the time and resources to fully implement the important initiatives adopted by the General Assembly over the past few years.

Funding for Public Education

The Knox County Board of Education and the Knox County Commission believe it is crucial to the future of our state that the Legislature invest more in public education, fully fund the Basic Education Program (BEP), including the recommendations of the BEP Review Committee, and implementation of the second phase of education finance reform ("BEP 2.0").

Local Control of Public Education

The Knox County Board of Education and the Knox County Commission urge the Legislature to leave decisions regarding public education in the hands of local school boards, who understand their communities' needs best. An example of this would be to revise the legislation regarding the mandatory inclusion of quick scores into students' final grades and allow individual LEAs the flexibility to make those decisions.

Charter Schools

The Board and Commission support high quality charter schools, but believe the power to authorize charters should remain with local boards of education (to ensure a productive relationship and clear accountability) rather than a state-wide authorizer. Additionally, charter school proposers should be required to demonstrate a viable community need and community endorsement for the proposed school. Furthermore, the Board and Commission believe that student admission to charter schools should not be based on any selection criteria other than a lottery system.

Opposition to School Vouchers

The Board of Education and the County Commission oppose any legislation to create a voucher program in Tennessee that would divert money intended for public education to private schools. Private schools are not required to serve all students, nor meet Tennessee's nationally recognized standards and accountability measures. Vouchers would therefore diminish equal opportunity and public accountability by channeling public tax dollars to private schools that do not face state equity standards and accountability requirements. We do support school choice, within the public school system, for any student who is zoned to a school that is failing to meet accountability measures.

Teacher Performance Evaluation

The Knox County Board of Education and the Knox County Commission embrace annual performance evaluation of teachers as a critical professional development and instructional improvement tool. The Board and Commission firmly support educator-driven improvements to the evaluation system. We urge the Legislature and State Board of Education to more closely align teacher effect scores to students the teachers directly instruct, and to make teacher evaluation better reflect different educator roles.

Instructional Technology

The Board and Commission acknowledge that teachers and students must be provided adequate educational resources that will directly impact instruction in the classroom. Instructional technology is critical not only because our students will live, work, and compete in a digital world, but also because it allows our teachers to provide even more innovative, effective, and personalized instruction for our students. We urge the Legislature to utilize a portion of the fiscal year 2015 \$400+ million general fund surplus towards educational technology.