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A MESSAGE FROM COMMISSIONER SCHWINN

As Commissioner of Education, I am grateful for the opportunity to witness excellence in classrooms across the state, and deeply appreciate the hard work of Tennessee's teachers, schools, and district leaders, especially over the last 10+ years.

During this time, individuals from every community in our state helped set high expectations for our children, and thanks to the dedication of families, educators, policymakers, communities and more, Tennessee students have demonstrated tremendous progress.

The work that spurred this progress calls for us to build on our achievements and continue Tennessee's nationally recognized growth. Together, we must ensure all of our students are on a path to success, and we have critical work before us.

While we celebrate historic progress over the last ten years, I cannot wait to celebrate how much our students will accomplish over the decade ahead. Imagine it is 2030 – how many more third graders will read on grade level compared to just over one-third today? How many seniors will graduate prepared to enter post-secondary education or the workforce, compared to 40% today? I recognize that it is more hard work and we have already come a long way. However, from what I have seen from the fastest improving state in the country, I believe that together, we will become the highest achieving.

Our state has unique opportunities ahead and we must recognize the urgency of now. I know that Tennesseans believe in our children, know what works for our students, and are willing to come together to do the work.

In this report, we outline the Tennessee Department of Education's strategic initiatives to help further support educators, schools, and districts as they strive to improve student learning and success. We believe that by taking a comprehensive and coherent approach to high-quality academics, the whole child, and our incredible educators, Tennessee can and will set all students on a path to success.

Together, I believe that we will ensure the Best for All.

Commissioner Penny Schwinn
Tennessee Department of Education
The Department of Education Best for All strategic plan sets a vision and intention that together as a state, we will set all Tennessee students on a path to success.

If we are successful, then Tennessee will increase the number of students who, two years after high-school graduation, are meeting key attainment milestones that we know help build successful in life, including:

> Persistence in a postsecondary education
> Earning a postsecondary degree or certificate
> Working in a job that provides a high quality of life for themselves and their families, and/or
> Enrolling in the military

Measuring critical indicators of future success is a key part of our work under Best for All.

### 2018 - 2019 DATA ON BEST FOR ALL INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third graders proficient in English Language Arts</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth graders proficient in math</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth graders proficient in English Language Arts</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school students scoring 21+ on the ACT</td>
<td>42%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
To improve outcomes for students across the state of Tennessee, the Best for All strategic plan focuses on three priority areas:

**Academics**: All Tennessee students will have access to a high-quality education, no matter where they live.
- Early Literacy Supports
- High-Quality Instructional Materials
- Innovative Assessments
- Career Exploration

**Whole Child**: Tennessee public schools will be equipped to serve the academic and non-academic needs of all kids.
- Whole Child Supports
- Citizenship and Character Education
- Exceptionalities

**Educators**: Tennessee will set a new path for the education profession and be the top state to become and remain a teacher and leader.
- Grow Your Own
- Educator and Leader Preparation Innovation
- School Leader Support

**FOUNDATIONAL ACTIONS SUPPORTING THESE PRIORITIES**
As we embark on exciting new work to support our students, we must also ensure continuous improvement in the areas that have built strong foundations for education in Tennessee:

- Maintaining high academic standards, annual assessments, and strong accountability
- Engaging with parents, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers statewide
- Empowering families with access to and choice for enrolling in high-quality schools
973,659 students in public schools

Student achievement

Only 34.4% of students are performing at or above grade level.

4th Grade
- Math: 40%
- Reading: 35%

8th Grade
- Math: 30.7%
- Reading: 32%

42% of students scoring 21+ or higher on the ACT.

Student demographics

- 35.1% black, Hispanic and native American
- 33.5% economically disadvantaged
- 4.1% English learners
- 11.7% students with disabilities
ACADEMICS: ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE.

STRATEGY

EARLY LITERACY SUPPORTS

WHY THIS MATTERS:
A critical foundation for life-long learning, early literacy must be a top-priority for Tennessee. In 2019, only 37 percent of third-grade students could read on grade level in elementary school. Teachers need more and better training and resources to help them meet the needs of all learners. Early literacy supports will focus on rapidly increasing the percent of students who are able to read proficiently at grade level, which opens significantly more opportunity for them later in life.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
All K-2 teachers in Tennessee must have access to and use a foundational skills curriculum, proven to help children learn to read. Elementary school teachers will participate in statewide training to build and strengthen their knowledge in evidence-based content and practice around effective literacy instruction. Reading diagnostics will help identify whether a student is on or off track and pinpoint individual needs in order to deploy the most appropriate supports for each child. Elementary schools will have the opportunity to participate in regional implementation networks and the department will provide family resource guides to promote the development of reading skills outside of the classroom.
STRATEGY

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

WHY THIS MATTERS:
After the teacher in the classroom, the instructional materials a teacher uses become the next most impactful part of a child’s education. High-quality instructional materials provide teachers with the necessary tools and resources they need to prepare and deliver strong lessons that align to high academic standards and boost student achievement and outcomes.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
The department identifies and the State Board approves a suite of high-quality textbooks and instructional materials in order to empower districts across the state to select materials that will best address the needs of their local students. Through strong support to districts and schools, the department will advance the effective implementation and utilization of these materials in schools and classrooms every day. An online portal will provide educators access to a suite of resources aligned to standards and instructional materials that will help facilitate ongoing learning at the local level.

ACADEMICS: ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE.
INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENTS

WHY THIS MATTERS:
Tennessee’s work to create and adhere to high academic standards has led to increases in student achievement and outcomes. While the assessments included in the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) are aligned to Tennessee’s high academic standards, some student assessments are being developed by districts with their own resources, and a majority are not yet fully aligned to state standards. Districts, school leaders, and educators need more support to administer interim and formative assessments that are fully aligned to Tennessee state standards, and provide actionable information to further accelerate student achievement and growth.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Tennessee will develop and deploy a suite of free, curriculum-aligned interim and formative assessments and resources, with direct, easy access for educators, school leaders, and districts. These resources will empower educators to close gaps in student learning, clarify expectations for content standards, reduce local testing expenses, and increase instructional time by ensuring the assessments are more efficient.
Over the next year, the department will research national career programs and visit elementary, middle, and high schools with “exemplar” career awareness, exploration, and advising programs to determine best practices and strategies, to identify ways to scale and improve career exploration in Tennessee. Every child should know the career opportunities available, and we will work to expand that access for all students. The department is also working to provide an intentional formula of policy flexibility and technical assistance that empowers districts to reimagine the high school experience in order to meet the needs of today’s students and prepare them for successful transitions to postsecondary training and education. Further, the Tennessee Pathways Certification program forms the basis of and links between strong K-12 pathways and postsecondary. In 2019, for example, 81 districts across the state submitted more than 400 applications to certify strong pathways, and the department will foster even more innovation and advancement in this space in the years to come.
WHOLE CHILD: TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL KIDS.

STRATEGY

WHOLE CHILD SUPPORTS

WHY THIS MATTERS:
Whole Child initiatives promote access to the foundational resources necessary to ensure students can flourish academically. The integration and collaboration between education leaders and the health sector aim to improve each child’s cognitive, physical, and social development. By focusing efforts to increase immediate access to the physical and mental health supports of our students, educators, and families, we are investing in the wellbeing of our youngest Tennesseans before they become the leaders of tomorrow.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Supporting the whole child begins with eliminating barriers to critical health and well-being. New resource mapping tools, community partnerships and in-school resources will provide insight to the supports locally available throughout the state to help ensure children in need receive immediate services. The state will conduct a needs assessment on what resources would be most helpful, create tools to match district and schools with local providers and help expedite delivery of service, and identify opportunities to address in-school whole child needs. Over the last year, districts and schools have already identified a number of opportunities including counseling, psychological, and social services; support to develop social and personal skills and school climate; and stronger family engagement and community involvement.
WHOLE CHILD: TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL KIDS.

STRATEGY

CITIZENSHIP AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

WHY THIS MATTERS:
For students to be life- and workforce-ready, additional development beyond academic content is necessary. Tennessee-specific programs that focus on helping students develop strong personal characteristics, financial literacy, and a solid understanding of citizenship and civics will help to prepare students to make lifelong contributions to our state.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
The Citizenship and Character Education initiative creates a PK-12 Tennessee-specific curricula that incorporates existing state requirements into one, cohesive space and will include financial literacy, citizenship education, student personal development, and civics. Districts and schools will now have access to free, high-quality instructional materials for students to cover current mandatory requirements and best practices related to citizenship and character education, while ensuring teachers are equipped to deliver coherent content aligned to our state standards in their classrooms.

STRATEGY

EXCEPTIONALITIES

WHY THIS MATTERS:
Students with exceptionalities have learning needs beyond the supports provided in the general, core curriculum. Students with disabilities, English learners, gifted students, highly mobile youth, and children needing additional interventions due to academic or behavioral challenges, as well as educators of these students, need more supports to accelerate academic achievement.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
The state will create an infrastructure that effectively supports children with exceptionalities, providing tools for families and educators to help navigate the system, and regional hubs to spur deeper collaboration and sharing of expertise most needed by districts. This infrastructure will also provide families with additional resources to help them navigate the educational system so they can actively engage and advocate for their child's needs. Finally, the state will encourage stronger regional engagement to ensure close coordination with the stakeholder groups that support these students and their families.
EDUCATORS: TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER.

STRATEGY

GROW YOUR OWN

WHY THIS MATTERS:
All Tennessee students deserve access to a high-quality education and an effective teacher in every classroom. Declining enrollment in traditional educator preparation programs (EPPs) poses challenges to this goal. Nationally and statewide, EPPs report dramatically reduced enrollment in teacher education programs, and school districts are beginning to experience serious teacher shortages, especially in hard to fill areas like mathematics, sciences, special education, and English as a second language. The most recent Tennessee data reflected over 1,100 teacher vacancies statewide, resulting in tens of thousands of students without a certified teacher in the classroom during the school day, including over 300 elementary school classrooms. Moreover, unpaid student teaching assignments can create barriers to the teaching profession for aspiring teachers from low-income households to working adults.

Percentage of Tennessee districts that do not receive enough high quality teacher applicants, by position

- Special Education: 85%
- Secondary Math: 85%
- Middle Grades Math: 84%
- Secondary Science: 73%
- Middle Grades Science: 73%
- ESL: 72%

WHAT THIS MEANS:
The department will strive to think beyond traditional routes to teaching to support the development of “Grow Your Own” programs that increase access to and success in the profession. For example, in 2019, the department approved its first partnership between Clarksville Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) with Austin Peay State University (APSU) and Lipscomb University. In fall 2020, CMCSS and APSU will have a cohort of future teachers who will earn a free bachelor’s degree in only three years, become dual certified in middle school math or science plus special education, and participate in a multi-year residency experience while being a full-time employed paraprofessional, earning a salary, health insurance, and retirement contributions. In addition, CMCSS plans to partner with Lipscomb University to offer future teachers a licensure program that includes a one-year, full-time paid residency and dual certification (K-5 and special education) at no cost to the teacher. In another example, the department approved Rutherford County to be the state’s first educator preparation program as a district.

The department will continue to expand Grow Your Own programs, including a Governor’s Fellowship to provide up to 1,000 students with a free college education in conjunction with
The department will support a shift from theory-based to practice-based preparation, with a focus on expanding residency-based models, dual certification programs, and emphasizing evidence-based content most relevant to prospective teachers and leaders. Along with requiring high-quality field experience under mentor educators and leaders, the department will also launch the most innovative educator preparation program in the nation, right here in Tennessee.

**STRATEGY**

**EPP/LPP INNOVATION**

**WHY THIS MATTERS:**
Student achievement and outcomes are tied to the effectiveness of classroom teachers and their school leaders. Developing effective teachers and school leaders relies on the quality of their field experiences in their respective preparation programs, specifically the amount of time that they have real-world, on-the-ground training. Currently, EPP program participants are only required to complete 15 weeks of classroom-based field experience before becoming the teacher of record, while field experience for future school leaders is largely undefined.

**WHAT THIS MEANS:**
The department will support a shift from theory-based to practice-based preparation, with a focus on expanding residency-based models, dual certification programs, and emphasizing evidence-based content most relevant to prospective teachers and leaders. Along with requiring high-quality field experience under mentor educators and leaders, the department will also launch the most innovative educator preparation program in the nation, right here in Tennessee.

**STRATEGY**

**SCHOOL LEADER SUPPORTS**

**WHY THIS MATTERS:**
Nationally, a 2017 survey found between 18-21 percent of school leaders transition every four years, which is consistent with the rates of turnover seen in Tennessee public schools. This is important because changes in school leadership can have dramatic, negative effects on schools’ academic performance according to multiple sources of research, including the Tennessee Education Research Alliance.

**WHAT THIS MEANS:**
The department is establishing working groups for school leaders to help design and implement a clear, coherent strategy for school leader development. Leveraging the collaboration of school leaders, the department will design or expand its Principal Supervisor Network, Aspiring Principal Network, Rural Principal Network, and District Leadership Network. Additionally, the department will launch innovative career pathways and endorsements for teachers to build programmatic expertise, while being able to continue in the classroom.
Tennessee’s Education Foundations

STRATEGY

ASSESSMENT

WHY THIS MATTERS:
If students are to be prepared for success after graduation, they must demonstrate an extensive set of knowledge and skills, and in order to effectively support all students, educators must have accurate data from standards-aligned assessments that they trust. Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments are designed to help families, teachers, and school leaders identify what knowledge and skills students have mastered and where achievement gaps exist. Therefore, it is critical to work with assessment vendors to ensure a smooth and successful administration of these assessments, and timely return of student results.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
The department drastically improved administration of the annual state assessment in 2019, including two successful exam administration windows and an expanded suite of planned improvements. Further, the state negotiated a new assessment administration contract, which is projected to save the state several million dollars every year. The transition to the new administration vendor, Pearson, resulted in a strong assessment administration in both the spring and fall 2019 windows, early scanning and scoring of student answer documents, and on-time delivery of raw scores to districts.

Following the release of student scores in January 2020, the department is launching two new student results portals—one for educators and one for families. The educator portal provides test results through the lens of a teacher or school leader. This shift also means parents will no longer need to rely solely on paper score reports, as they will now be able to log in and see their student’s results and get additional information about next steps tailored to their child, at their convenience.

Further, the department is working with Pearson and local districts to plan for a smooth return to online testing for high school end of course exams during the 2020-21 school year. The department will also be launching new formative assessment tools in 2020-21, including full-length practice exams and released assessment questions for use in classrooms. Educators will have access to a suite of TCAP assessment questions aligned to state standards as well as a new portal for visibility into their student results on summative exams. Formative assessments will be developed to align to high-quality materials on the state curriculum adoption list. These tools will put more assessment information into the hands of educators throughout the school year, allowing them to determine individual student needs and differentiate support.
ACCOUNTABILITY

WHY THIS MATTERS:
School accountability models can be complex, but the department is committed to clearly articulating expectations for districts and schools, and to spurring innovation and continuous improvement. Accountability for meeting the state’s high academic standards has been the foundation of the last decade of Tennessee’s gains in student achievement and will be a springboard that propels students and educators toward success.

WHAT THIS MEANS:
To share school and district performance information with families and stakeholder groups each year, the department provides the online Tennessee Education Report Card with relevant, user-friendly information about how schools and districts are performing on a variety of indicators, empowering stakeholders to view and explore data aligned to different aspects of performance for all student groups. It will continue to be important to run an accountability system that transparently reports the performance of all students in our public schools – including each student group – and acknowledge both the success and opportunities that exist for continued growth and achievement.

Key Accountability Indicators on the Tennessee Education Report Card

- **Academic Achievement**: whether students are performing at or above grade level or whether the school improved from year to year
- **Student Academic Growth**: whether students are making progress from year to year
- **Chronically Out of School**: whether students are absent more than 10 percent of the year or whether the school improved in this indicator from year to year
- **Progress on English Language Proficiency**: whether students who are English learners are making progress
- **Ready Graduate**: whether students are prepared for postsecondary education or career paths after they leave high school or whether the school improved on this metric
- **Graduation Rate**: whether students are graduating from high school on time or whether the school improved their graduation rate from year to year

Further, Tennessee schools will soon be rated on an A–F grading scale for the first time. This system will help families meaningfully differentiate between high and low performing schools and districts and will help educators and school leaders discern how to better serve their students and learn from those that are achieving exemplary outcomes. 

Percentage of Tennessee schools on A–F grading scale, based on 2019 data

- **A**: 26%
- **B**: 40%
- **C**: 24%
- **D**: 5%
- **F**: 5%
WHY THIS MATTERS:

All students in Tennessee deserve access to a high-quality education, no matter where they live. In districts across Tennessee, there are schools where students have been underserved for years. Every three years since 2012, Tennessee has identified Priority schools, defined as the state’s bottom five percent of schools by overall student performance. These schools require additional and intensive supports to demonstrate necessary improvements in student achievement measures. In instances where interventions have proven unsuccessful, the state-run Achievement School District (ASD) serves as the most intensive intervention, which provides a new governance structure and additional supports to underperforming schools in order to provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment designed to boost student outcomes. The department also identifies schools for targeted support and improvement, known in Tennessee as Focus schools. The focus school designation includes schools in which one or more student groups are determined to be underperforming. In all of these cases, the state’s responsibility is to provide more opportunity and oversight to encourage and accelerate student achievement, so that all children have the chance to realize their full potential.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

While there have been bright spots, the ASD has not experienced success across all schools in the portfolio. Based on a series of research reports, the department did not effectively engage in performance management of the schools and operators in the ASD, leading to widely varied performance across operators and inconsistent community engagement and buy-in to the model. The department remains committed to the ASD as a necessary intervention in the state’s lowest performing schools, and in the 2019-20 school year, the department has begun to engage in a restructuring of the current ASD framework. The purpose of this next phase in the ASD is to build on the lessons learned and successes of the initial model, and develop the next iteration to promote even stronger student achievement gains for our highest opportunity campuses.
The school turnaround framework maximizes existing resources and emphasizes school-specific support. A tiered approach for identifying, turning around, and accelerating our highest opportunity Priority schools, will emphasize intervention consistent with school performance, and promote local involvement and investment in the path forward towards lasting, positive change.

Tier III:
ASD

Tier II:
TURNAROUND

Tier I:
IMPROVEMENT

FOCUS SCHOOLS
Tailored support to identified student group(s)

**Long-term investment in school transformation**

**Department prescribes evidence-based interventions**

**District capacity-building**

The department’s work moving forward will be formed by the following guiding principles:

> While school turnaround takes time, this work is urgent; what is best for students cannot wait.

> The Achievement School District remains a necessary intervention in Tennessee’s school framework when other local interventions have proven to be unsuccessful in improving outcomes for students.

> The local community should play an active role when it comes to making decisions regarding its schools.

> The longer a school remains a Priority school, the state’s role must become stronger and more involved.

> This is a long-term effort—discipline, consistency, and clear structures will be critical.

The school turnaround framework maximizes existing resources and emphasizes school-specific support. A tiered approach for identifying, turning around, and accelerating our highest opportunity Priority schools, will emphasize intervention consistent with school performance, and promote local involvement and investment in the path forward towards lasting, positive change.
**WHY THIS MATTERS:**

The Best for All strategic plan seeks to provide all Tennessee students access to high-quality educational opportunities, regardless of where they live within the state. In order to achieve this goal, the department must employ a comprehensive set of strategies across school sectors designed to:

- identify academic models shown to produce lasting student achievement
- empower Tennessee families with the tools necessary to learn about and access these options
- expand those schools’ capacity to reach and serve greater numbers of students and communities
- apply lessons learned from high-performing schools to improve the quality of all schools

By the numbers, Tennessee families take advantage of education choices when choices are accessible to them.

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**Tennessee’s 973,659 public school students in grades K-12:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students in Tennessee’s 116 Public Charter Schools</th>
<th>Upto 5,000 Low-Income Students in Davidson County and Shelby County Will Have Access to Education Savings Accounts</th>
<th>130 Families Taking Advantage of Individual Education Accounts Across the State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>STUDENTS IN TENNESSEE’S 116 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>UPTO 5,000 LOW-INCOME STUDENTS IN DAVIDSON COUNTY AND SHELBY COUNTY WILL HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>130 FAMILIES TAKING ADVANTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION ACCOUNTS ACROSS THE STATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Memphis
51 SCS CHARTER SCHOOLS
15,200+ (14%) STUDENTS
23 ASD CHARTER SCHOOLS
9,500+ (9%) STUDENTS
1 TN STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION CHARTER SCHOOL
150+ (<1%) STUDENTS

Nashville
29 MNPS CHARTER SCHOOLS
11,400+ (14%) STUDENTS
3 ASD CHARTER SCHOOLS
800+ (<1%) STUDENTS

Knoxville
1 CHARTER SCHOOL
370+ (<1%) STUDENTS

Chattanooga
4 CHARTER SCHOOLS
1,100+ (3%) STUDENTS
To ensure these choices remain high-quality options for students and families, the state has adopted several strategic goals and policies:

### FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS:
- Forming an independent charter commission empowered to authorize the establishment of high-quality schools and model thoughtful governance
- Targeting grant funding to schools showing greatest potential of expanding their academic impact
- Designing and delivering technical assistance directly to charter schools to foster continuous improvement

### FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS:
- Overseeing how districts use school authorization fees to maximize the public education funding directly serving students, classrooms, and schools
- Monitoring virtual schools according to the standards expected of all public schools
- Supporting initiatives related to open enrollment, and expanding options for students and families beyond their zoned school

### FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS:
- Creating an Education Savings Account program offered exclusively to Tennessee low-income students & families
- Expanding the Individualized Education Account program to reach a greater number of students with special needs
- Monitoring private schools to ensure student safety, well-being, and achievement
2019 IN REVIEW

POLICY ADVANCEMENTS

➢ Tennessee continued to build upon the student-centered policies enacted over the last decade, implementing high academic standards, aligned annual assessments, and strong accountability measures with fidelity.

➢ The Tennessee General Assembly expanded high-quality school choice options for Tennessee families, including the Education Savings Accounts program designed to give more students access to high-quality education options.

➢ Further expanding choice options for Tennessee families, the General Assembly passed legislation to create the Tennessee Charter School Commission to expand high-quality charter school offerings and ensure quality throughout the Tennessee charter school sector.

➢ Strengthening academic curriculum designed to educate the whole child, Governor Lee’s Civic Seal and mini-grants program launched to promote life-long civic engagement in schools and districts across the state.

➢ The department approved the first of multiple Grow Your Own partnerships, which enables individuals to get a free bachelor’s or master’s degree from partner universities with a dual certification in special education while also participating in a paid residency for three years under a master teacher.

DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS AND INITIATIVES

➢ Commissioner Schwinn launched the department’s new strategic plan, Best for All, after engaging with stakeholders in over 500 classroom visits, more than 70 district meetings, and over 35,000 educator and public survey comments.

➢ Grounded in this input, the Best for All plan set three strategic priorities for the Department—academics, whole child, and educators—to improve student outcomes across the state of Tennessee.

➢ The department oversaw two successful exam administration windows in 2019. In fall 2019, more than 66,700 were students tested and 0 calls for urgent help. Raw scores were delivered to school districts on time.

➢ The department negotiated a new assessment administration contract which is projected to save the state several million dollars a year.
2019 IN REVIEW

SUPPORT TO DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

- Six million dollars in charter facilities grant funds was distributed to public charter schools to improve school facilities. An additional $6 million has been made available for high-performing public charter schools through a competitive grant process.

- Due in large part to the priority focus on School Resource Officers (SROs) from the Governor and General Assembly, the full-time SRO placement increased by 17% from the 2018-19 school year to the current school year, leading to 73% of schools in the state having this safety measure in place.

- Seventy-four high schools were recognized for earning the Tennessee Pathways Certification. The certification, launched in the 2018-19 academic year, creates an opportunity for schools and districts to earn recognition for creating strong alignment between high school programs of study, postsecondary partners, and high-quality employment opportunities in local regions.

- The department's Centers of Regional Excellence offices met with every district that has federally designated turnaround (Targeted Support and Improvement or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement) schools to support them in conducting a needs assessment and planning for improvement. This enhanced level of concierge support, specifically for districts with low-performing schools and rural districts, is a significant shift in focus.

- A pre-K coaching pilot with four participating districts was successfully launched, with full-time pre-K coaches providing strong curriculum implementation support for teachers of their districts.

- The department created and improved an instructional materials adoption process that prioritized quality for the first time, in addition to a continued support for compliance. A recent Comptroller’s report confirmed the improvements that were made in just the first year, and the proactive changes that were made to the previously designed process.
Best for All is the strategic plan for the Tennessee Department of Education.

For more information, sources, and questions about this report, please visit us at bestforall.tnedu.gov.