



TENNESSEE ALLIANCE FOR
**EQUITY IN
EDUCATION**
Powered by The Education Trust in Tennessee

2024 Policy Agenda

The Tennessee Alliance for Equity in Education comprises 85+ allies from across the state who share a unifying belief that our schools and postsecondary institutions create pathways to a more just Tennessee. We believe that Tennessee, at its best, offers opportunities that ensure all students can thrive, but more work is needed to remove systemic barriers along the educational continuum. As an Alliance, our work focuses on students whose needs and potential have been overlooked for too long, including students from low-income backgrounds, of color, with disabilities, in rural areas, and English learners, regardless of citizenship status. Through research, engagement, and advocacy, the Alliance works to expand opportunity and attainment from preschool through postsecondary education by engaging diverse communities and stakeholders to increase the public will to act on issues that impact educational justice.

PRIORITY 1



Promote Accessible, Rigorous, and Affirming Learning Experiences

Equity Principle:

Every student in Tennessee attends a school that prepares them for the opportunities and demands of an increasingly complex and diverse world. Additionally, students receive high-quality and differentiated instruction and materials that are culturally and linguistically sustaining.

Equity Actions:

- Support student learning by providing integrated academic support and high-quality instruction and materials while maintaining access to grade-level content in math, ELA, social studies, and science
- Create a transparent, aligned, and equity-driven statewide accountability system that provides robust and targeted support and resources required for school improvement
- Expand access to high-quality and affordable early childhood education to extend earlier access to literacy and other critical experiences by reducing costs for families who would benefit most
- Publish annual, disaggregated, and centralized data on Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs), including enrollment, credit attainment, course type, and participant postsecondary enrollment



PRIORITY 2

Address Funding and Resource Equity

Equity Principle:

Every student in Tennessee attends a school that receives robust and stable funding and resources based on student needs through a flexible and transparent funding system.

Equity Actions:

- Increase state allocations to ensure our per-student funding level is at or above the national average (approx. \$16,131 per pupil)
- Sustain ESSER funding best practices based on student need and evidence by providing districts with flexibility, guidance, and strategic support
- Support districts to leverage student and evidenced-based budgeting strategies aligned with TISA
- Publicly report all education revenue and expenditure data in an annual, longitudinal, disaggregated, transparent, and interactive format to promote stakeholder transparency



PRIORITY 3

Increase Educator Diversity and Quality

Equity Principle:

Every student in Tennessee has access to skilled, well-resourced, and competitively compensated teachers, leaders, and staff who reflect the state’s racial and linguistic diversity. Educators authentically engage in decision-making that impacts their profession.

Equity Actions:

- Address financial barriers to joining the educator workforce by reimbursing licensure assessment costs based on type of licensure and student need to bolster the teacher pipeline
- Support teachers on permit and endorsement exemptions with cost-effective and high-quality pathways to become fully certified and supported to address teacher vacancies in the long term
- Develop peer educator mentoring programs to support early career teacher retention and leadership pathways for current educators
- Publish statewide, real-time teacher retention, turnover, and vacancy data by district, licensure area, demographics, experience level, and other factors to better understand and support the educator workforce



PRIORITY 4

Support Students’ Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

Equity Principle:

Every student in Tennessee has access to a physically safe, emotionally supportive, inclusive, diverse, and linguistically accessible school environment to support their learning and mental health. Additionally, school and district environments foster affirming relationships between staff, students, and families. Students authentically engage in decision-making that impacts their education.

Equity Actions:

- Collect and report annual and disaggregated data on how schools and districts are leveraging funding to support student mental health
- Support school districts to implement student surveys to improve student outcomes and wellbeing
- Eliminate corporal punishment and exclusionary school discipline practices for non-violent offenses, including preschool to 2nd-grade suspensions and expulsions
- Expand food access and security to support student wellness and learning



PRIORITY 5

Expand Access and Success in Higher Education

Equity Principle:

Every student in Tennessee has access to an affordable postsecondary degree or credential that propels them to a career that ensures economic prosperity. In addition, all students have access to resources and wrap-around supports that drive them to and through higher education.

Equity Actions:

- Revise the in-state tuition policy for public institutions to ensure that every Tennessee high school graduate has equal access to postsecondary education, regardless of citizenship status or background
- Optimize Tennessee’s financial aid system through a streamlined, flexible design that centers the economic and personal realities of students from low-income backgrounds
- Leverage Tennessee’s higher education outcomes-based funding formula to substantially incentivize and support institutions to prioritize reducing attainment gaps by income level
- Provide targeted college access supports, including advising, from high school to postsecondary to address equity gaps in college-going