

**From:** Commissioner Schwinn <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 9/23/2021 6:00:26 AM  
**To:** Jason Golden <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Commissioner's Update for Directors, September 23

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~~Commissioner's Update for Directors~~

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## We will set all students on a path to success.

If we are successful, then Tennessee will see a substantial increase in the number of students on-track to meeting postsecondary goals two years after graduation.

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- [Key Updates](#) - Receive information on Promising Results from Summer Programming, the 2020-21 State Report Card Release, Tennessee's Six National Blue Ribbon Schools, Reading 360 Model Districts, the Reading 360 Virtual Summit this week, and more.
- [Academics](#) - Receive information on the Presidential Scholars Application, Updated Tennessee Universal Reading Screener Resources, the TPAC Virtual Field Trip Opportunity, and more.
- [Student Readiness](#) - Learn about the Defined Careers and ElevateTN Webinar, the TVA STEM Classroom Grant Program Application, the 2021-22 Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grants, and more.
- [Educators](#) - Receive information on the TASL Academy Registration for 2021-22, the SPED and ESL Additional Endorsement Grant Opportunity, the PAEMST Award Nominations, and more.
- [Supporting Work](#) - Learn about the 2021 LEA Compliance Report, the ARP Homeless 2.0 Application, Lead in Drinking Water Reporting, Opportunity for Free Water Lead Testing, and Assessment and Accountability updates.
- [In Case You Missed It](#) - Catch up on updates from previous issues!



New item



Previously run  
announcement



Deadline before  
next update

## Key Updates



### Gov. Lee, TDOE Promising Results From Historic Special Session on Education

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Wednesday, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee Department of Education shared encouraging data around the state's more than \$160 million investment in academic summer camps to address learning loss and accelerate achievement for Tennessee students.

Throughout the pandemic, Tennessee has led the nation in providing academic supports for students. In January 2021, Governor Lee convened the Tennessee General Assembly for a [special legislative session](#) to pass policies to mitigate COVID-19 disruptions and support Tennessee students.

#### **Interventions for Summer Learning**

The [Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act](#) passed in special session provided funding to local school districts for K-8 academic summer camps across the state.

New data from summer camps will further inform how the state, schools, teachers and families can support student success.

### **Promising Results Include:**

#### **Strong Student Participation**

- This summer, both summer learning camps and after school STREAM camps had higher attendance in elementary grades compared to middle school grades.
- Overall, more than 120,000 Tennessee students enrolled in summer programming across the state.

#### **English and Language Arts:**

- Overall, data showed an improvement of 5.97 percentage point
- Elementary grades saw an improvement of 7.34 percentage point
- Middle school grades saw an improvement of 0.66 percentage points

#### **Math:**

- Overall, data showed an improvement of 10.49 percentage points
- Elementary grades saw an improvement of 11.66 percentage points
- Middle school grades saw an improvement of 6 percentage points

Commissioner Schwinn's presentation from the House Education Committees Summer Study on Wednesday, Sept. 22, can be found [here](#). Find the Accelerating TN Tour 2021: Bright Spots Guide [here](#).

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## **2020-21 State Report Card Release**

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The [2020-21 State Report Card](#) will be launched later today. The State Report Card is a tool for parents and community members to have easy to understand information about Tennessee districts and schools. Prior to each Report Card's release, parents, educators, and community organizations provide feedback that help the department develop a continually improving Report Card with a dashboard of key information about every school and district in the state.

This year's Report Card will have different amounts of information and data available due to the passage of [Public Chapter 2](#). A comprehensive press release and additional resources will be released later today from the department.

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## **Six Tennessee Schools Recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools**

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Tuesday, September 21, the U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona [recognized](#) six Tennessee schools as [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) for 2021. The recognition is based on a school's

overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student groups.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools from across the country on an annual basis. For the past 39 years, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has granted approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools, with some schools winning multiple awards. Schools are eligible for nomination after five years.

The following **Tennessee** schools have been selected as 2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools:

- Clovercroft Elementary School, Williamson County Schools
- Liberty Elementary School, Franklin Special School District
- Towne Acres Elementary School, Johnson City Schools
- Sam Houston Elementary School, Maryville City Schools
- Meigs Middle Magnet School, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
- Thrasher Elementary School, Hamilton County School

To learn more about the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, click [here](#).

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## **TDOE Announces Reading 360 Model Districts**

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Last week, the department announced five districts have been recognized as Reading 360 Model Districts for their promising early literacy work- Bristol Tennessee City Schools, Jackson County Schools, Lebanon Special School District, Milan Special School District, and Williamson County Schools- and have been selected as Tennessee Model Foundational Skills Implementation District grant awardees for implementing the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement over the 2020-21 school year.

In July 2020, the department [released](#) the free, optional supplement to support early literacy, which follows evidenced-based research to build a solid foundation for literacy in pre-K through second grade.

Districts applied to be Reading 360 Model Implementation Districts for the TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement in the spring of 2021, and the five districts selected demonstrated a strong and clear focus on foundational literacy skills. Each of the five districts will receive a grant award of \$300,000 to support their ongoing implementation of foundational literacy skills as well as help the department collect model instructional videos for the implementation tools and resources that any district may use to support their own implementation of foundational literacy skills.

Read more [here](#).

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## **Reading 360 Virtual Summit This Week**

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Reading 360 Virtual Summit is underway, September 21 through September 23! The Summit is highlighting best practices for the Reading 360 comprehensive literacy initiative. Featuring six roundtable sessions with national literacy experts and Tennessee educators and breakout sessions that will further dive into the topics highlighted during the roundtable discussions, the summit

will focus on foundational literacy skills instruction, high-quality materials implementation, family-community partnerships, and educator preparation. There is also a special track of sessions for districts participating in the Early Literacy Network.

Check out the [full agenda](#) to learn more. Follow updates and takeaways from the Summit on social media [here](#).

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## ★ TN Chamber and TDOE Providing Resources to Build the Future Workforce for K-12 Schools

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry are working to make career awareness and preparation more seamless for students, parents, employers and educators. With the support of Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) the Chamber is offering the Tennessee Career Awareness & Preparation System ("TN-CAPS") and Learning Blade, to provide career-based curriculum for educators in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry is amplifying the effort by working with regional chambers to strengthen the connection between schools and local businesses and to aid in regional and statewide workforce development. There are over 130 businesses across Tennessee's 9 economic regions already registered in TN-CAPS. These businesses have indicated how they will engage with their local schools.

Both programs provide schools a free solution to the workforce "skills gap" by providing localized, demand-driven, student-centered resources.

For more information on the TN-CAPS, click [here](#). For more information on the Learning Blade, click [here](#) or contact [REDACTED].

## Academics

*All Tennessee students will have access to a high-quality education, no matter where they live.*

## ★ Updated Tennessee Universal Reading Screener Resources

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Instructional Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED] Or [REDACTED]

### Overview

The TN Universal Reading Screener was released by the department to provide a free and optional reading and math screener to enable districts to comply with the requirements of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act. Districts may also choose to use the other State Board of Education-approved universal reading screeners to meet the screening requirements required by the act.

### Updated Matrix Guidance and Resources

In response to district feedback and engagement, as well as a review of all relevant laws and policies, the department is providing updated guidance and additional flexibility for districts related to the TN-URS and dyslexia screening. Please see [this guidance document](#) for more information and an updated TN-URS screening matrix.

All guidance documents, including the [Universal Reading Screener Administration: Requirements for Universal Reading Screeners](#), are publicly posted on the [2021 Special Session Legislation Resources webpage](#).

### **Support and Training**

Support is available through weekly office hours every Friday from 10-11 a.m. CT. Join by using this [link](#).

### **Contact Information**

With questions or for more information about the Universal Reading Screener, please reach out to [REDACTED].

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## **Presidential Scholars Application Window Now Open**

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, School Counselors and CTE Directors*

**Contact:** [REDACTED] Or [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Education is excited to share an opportunity for each Tennessee high school to nominate a maximum of two seniors to be considered as state finalists for the U.S. Presidential Scholars program. One senior may be nominated from each school for the general academic component of the program, and one senior may be nominated for the CTE component of the program.

### **General Academic Component**

Our state can nominate high school seniors to be considered based on academic success and perseverance. The general academic component emphasizes the following areas on the application:

- Academic achievement
- Leadership skills
- Community involvement
- Overcoming obstacles
- Strong writing skills

The school principal, guidance counselor, or other designee may assist the student nominee with the completion of the online academic component state application, linked [here](#). Applications are due by **5 p.m. CT on November 6, 2021**.

### **CTE Component**

Our state can nominate high school seniors to be considered based on excellence in career and technical education (CTE). This component emphasizes the following areas on the application:

- Academic rigor
- Technical competence
- Employability skills
- Ingenuity and creativity

The school principal, guidance counselor, or other designee may assist the student nominee with the completion of the online CTE component state application, linked [here](#). Applications are due by **5 p.m. CT on November 6, 2021**.

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## **TPAC: Virtual Field Trip Opportunity Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers**

**Audience:** *Director of Schools, Instructional Supervisors, District Arts Coordinators, Principals, Educators*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The following is a message from our partners at the [Tennessee Performing Arts Center](#):

In order to continue serving as a resource to schools, the Tennessee Performing Arts Center will continue to offer virtual field trip and enrichment opportunities during the fall. The first virtual offering for this school year is a free performance of *Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers*®.

**Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers® – Virtual Performance:**

- **Available dates:** September 20-October 8, 2021
  - You will be provided a link to access the video during the entire show window. The performance is approximately 60 minutes in length.
- **Cost:** Free
- **Suggested Grades:** 5th grade and up
- **Booking:** Request a reservation online [here](#). After booking, you will be given a link to access the performance video.
  - Please note the video is presented through Vimeo. TPAC recommends checking ahead of time to determine if you can access Vimeo on school devices and/or working with district technology support to set up access to the platform.
- **Show Description:** In *Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers*, Dr. Paul T. Kwami and his students explore the stories of the original nine members of the world-renowned ensemble. Inviting viewers to share in their unique bond and learn the significance of spirituals in today's culture, the students reflect on their roles as preservers of the group's legacy. Created in collaboration with Dr. Kwami and director Jon Royal, the film is produced by Tennessee Performing Arts Center.

For more information about this virtual field trip opportunity or other TPAC educational enrichment programs, reach out to [Cassie LaFavor](#), TPAC Director of Education Enrichment, or by calling (615) 687-4288.

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 **CLASS Sampling of VPK Classrooms**

**Audience:** Director of Schools, VPK Directors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Early Learning Division will conduct observations in VPK classrooms using Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). These observations will be scheduled for **September 13-30, 2021**. These observations will be conducted in-person in 20% (186 total) of VPK classrooms selected at random. District VPK directors will be given a two-week window for when the observations will occur.

For more information on these observations, districts may reach out to their assigned early childhood quality and support specialist or to [Misty Moody](#).

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 **TN Arts Commission: Rolling Grant Funds for Arts Integration Projects**

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Instructional Supervisors, District Arts Coordinators, Principals, Arts Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The following is a message from our partners at the [Tennessee Arts Commission](#):

Applications for the [Arts Education Mini-Grant](#) opened Wednesday, September 1, 2021. This Rolling Grant program provides funds to Tennessee schools and nonprofit organizations for projects to improve instruction and increase student outcomes through arts integration. Eligible activities include:

- Hands-on training opportunities in arts integration techniques for arts specialists, classroom teachers, teaching artists, and/or arts education staff of nonprofit organizations.
- Arts-integrated classroom residencies in partnership with a professional teaching artist or nonprofit organization.

For more information, application guidelines are detailed [here](#).

Key guidelines to note:

- Applicants can request \$3,000-\$5,000.
- Applications must be received at least 30 days before the project start date.
- Awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants submitting complete and eligible materials.

With questions, reach out to [Alicia Fuss](#), TN Arts Commission Arts Education Director.

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## 2021-22 United States Senate Youth Program Application Opens

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, High School Counselors, High School Teachers

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The application for the 2021-22 United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is open. This opportunity is open to junior or senior high school students. Two students will be selected as Tennessee delegates to participate in the annual Washington Week experience which includes a variety of events that promote a unique understanding of the structure of the United States government.

The program sponsor, the Hearst Foundation, also offers selected state finalists a \$10,000 undergraduate scholarship.

Additional information, including the application link, can be found [here](#). Student applications are due by **11:59 p.m. CT on October 15, 2021**.

## Student Readiness

*Tennessee public schools will be equipped to serve the academic and non-academic needs of all students in their career pathways.*

## STEM/STE(A)M School Designation Intent to Apply Now Open!

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, Director of Schools, District staff, Educators, Principals, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The 2021-22 STEM/STE(A)M School Designation Intent to Apply is now open through **Thursday, September 30!** The Designation process recognizes school-wide STEM/STE(A)M integration models. Schools that earn STEM and STE(A)M Designation receive \$10,000 grants to expand integrated learning through Governor Lee's Future Workforce Initiative. STEM/STE(A)M education provides an opportunity for every student to discover and explore postsecondary paths and to become resilient, lifelong learners. Any K-12 school in Tennessee is eligible to apply. Learn more about the application process [here](#).

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## ★ Defined Careers and ElevateTN Webinar

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, Principals, Educators, CTE Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Last month, two new platforms were released to educators for grades 6-12 to expand and enhance career exploration and advising:

Defined Careers is a project-based solution that allows students in grades 6-12 to explore and experience careers. It includes a career assessment that guides students towards real-world projects across recommended career pathways. Defined Careers empowers educators to provide all students with equitable access to careers.

Elevate TN seeks to create a pipeline of skilled workers in Tennessee. The statewide web portal is available for any educator that serves grades 8-12 in any subject area including CTE programs of study. This platform provides students with job-shadowing and internship experiences, career exploration, and resume-building activities developed around local employer needs. Students can earn industry-recognized badges for their resumes while building skills that will support CTE industry credentials.

**Learn more with our webinar on Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021 from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. CT on Zoom. You can access the webinar [here](#).**

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## ★ Applications Now Open: TVA STEM Classroom Grant Program

**Audience:** CTE Educators, Educators, Principals

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network and STEMx network, managed by Battelle, are pleased to announce the 2021-22 K-12 classroom STEM grant program sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority in partnership with Bicentennial Volunteers Incorporated (a TVA retiree organization). The grant program is designed to fund STEM learning projects in classrooms and schools in the TVA service area.

Last year's program awarded \$800,000 in grants to schools across the Tennessee Valley. The competitive grant program provides teachers the opportunity to apply for funding up to \$5,000 for STEM projects with preference given to grant applications that explore TVA's primary area of focus: environment, energy, economic and career development, and community problem solving.

The grant application is open now at [www.tsin.org/classroom-grants](http://www.tsin.org/classroom-grants) and will remain open until **Monday, Oct. 18, 2021**. Eligible applicants are K-12 teachers or school administrators in public or private schools that receive power from a TVA distributor.

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## ★ 2021-22 Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Grants and the High School WBL Grant Intent to Apply

**Audience:** CTE Directors, Director of Schools, Principals, Educators, District Staff, CTE Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

### **2021-22 Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grants**

The 2021-22 Middle School STEM and CTE Career Exploration Start-Up & Expansion Grants are intended to drive innovation in implementing middle school science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and career and technical education (CTE) programs that will ultimately lead to increased opportunities for middle school students. In February 2019, Governor Bill Lee announced the Future Workforce Initiative aimed at increasing access to STEM and CTE in the classroom.

### **High School School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant**

High-quality WBL partnerships with local businesses are thriving across the state, resulting in more students gaining valuable on-the-job training in high-growth occupations. However, in some areas, students face barriers to these types of experiences, such as a lack of transportation, restrictions on students in the workplace, and/or master scheduling conflicts.

In order to increase the number of students participating in high-quality WBL placements, the department has allocated \$120,000 to support LEAs in the development of a self-sustaining school-based enterprise (SBE) for WBL students to operate. The 2021-22 High School WBL School-Based Enterprise Start-Up Grants are intended to drive innovation in implementing high-quality work-based learning experiences for students who face barriers to participate in off-campus placements.

### **Grant Requirements & Deadlines**

You can find requirements for the Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grants and the High School School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant, including descriptions of all the opportunities, in the 2021-22 Middle School STEM and CTE Career Exploration Start-Up & Expansion Grant Announcement available [here](#). This comprehensive guide also includes grant application questions that districts can use to draft responses prior to applying in ePlan.

Please note the important deadlines listed in the announcement. Prior to submitting a completed application in ePlan, all eligible applicants (LEAs) must submit a [Notice of Intent to Apply](#) by **11:59 p.m. CT on Thursday, Oct. 14**. Failure to submit a Notice of Intent to Apply by the stated deadline will disqualify any subsequent application.

Grant applications will be available in ePlan on **Monday, Oct. 18**. The application period will close on **Monday, Nov. 1 at 11:59 p.m. CT**.

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## **Announcing the Statewide Design Challenge**

**Audience:** *CTE Educators, Educators, Principals*

**Contact:** 

TSIN, in collaboration with the TN Chamber of Commerce, is excited to announce the 2022 Statewide Design Challenge: Infrastructure. Infrastructure is defined as the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise, which includes roads, buildings, utilities/power supplies, and more!

This year's challenge invites students to consider how they can improve their school, community, or world by reimagining an existing physical space, system, product, or service so that it is more equitable, accessible, or efficient. Students have a choice about how they approach the topic to best consider the needs of their local communities.

Participating schools will conduct classroom-level presentations and then nominate outstanding projects to participate in a virtual competition in Spring 2022. For safety and equity, all competitions will be held virtually this year. The cost and time of travel can be a burden to some families and schools. To alleviate that burden and encourage more students to explore STEM challenges, we will hold all levels of competition virtually. No student should be excluded from this opportunity due to constraint of their location in the state.

Sign up [here](#) to receive a Welcome Packet email.

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## **STE(A)M School Designation Added to STEM Designation!**

**Audience:** *CTE Directors, CTE educators, Educators, Principals*

**Contact:** 

Previously, schools have been able to apply for a STEM Designation to recognize outstanding efforts in STEM education. Acknowledging the importance of the arts, STE(A)M Designations are also now available to all Tennessee K-12 schools.

STE(A)M is an approach to teaching and learning that integrates science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. STE(A)M involves the application of creative thinking and design skills to STEM projects and introduces a variety of new ways to use traditional STEM skills. Schools can choose to apply for a STEM or a STE(A)M Designation.

Schools that seek to apply for STE(A)M School Designation will emphasize the arts integration within their narrative responses and artifacts provided within the portfolio application. Schools interested in applying for a STEM or STE(A)M Designation can learn more about the application process at the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network [website](#).

The STEM Designation Rubric has also been updated to include STE(A)M and to help schools identify the differences between applying for the STEM versus STE(A)M Designation. Explore updates to the STEM and STE(A)M School Designation rubric [here](#).

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## TDOE & UT Martin Offer Free ACT Prep Workshops and Classes to All Tennessee High School Students and Teachers

**Audience:** *Counselors, Director of Schools, CTE Educators, CTE Directors, Educators, Principals, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors*

**Contact:** 

In partnership with the University of Tennessee at Martin (UT Martin), the [department recently announced](#) that all Tennessee high school students and teachers will have access to workshops that help prepare students to succeed on the ACT, one of the most important college entrance exams offered to high school students across the country. These workshops began in Summer 2021 and are expected to continue through Fall 2022.

This fall we will offer five (5) [ACT Teacher Workshops](#). These free, two-hour workshops, conducted via Zoom, will provide strategies and practical skills to teachers to help them improve student ACT outcomes. Interested teachers can learn more about and register for the workshops [here](#).

The [ACT Success Tactics Workshops and Mastery Classes](#) and [Virtual Office Hours](#) are available to rising 11th and 12th graders in Tennessee. During these free virtual workshops, we will share resources and tools that will teach students effective test-taking strategies, as well as provide them content practice in specific subject areas. Interested students can learn more about and register for the workshops, classes, and office hours [here](#).

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## THEC/TSAC Friday Webinar Series for Counselors

**Audience:** *District Staff, Counselors, Principals, Educators, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors*

**Contact:** 

We are happy to announce a webinar series for counselors and college access professionals to coincide with College Application & Exploration Month. Please forward to any professional at your school who would benefit.

**Click below to register:**

- [FAST Review/State Aid Legislative Updates](#)
  - Friday, Sept. 24: 10 a.m. CT

- [Happy FAFSA Season!](#)
    - Friday, Oct. 1: 10 a.m. CT
- 

## Occupational License New Teacher Training (OLNTT) Facilitators Needed

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, District Staff, Educators, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Division of College, Career and Technical education is **currently seeking facilitators for the Occupational License New Teacher Training**. This training ensures that new CTE teachers are prepared to achieve immediate, measurable success with their students upon entering the classroom.

As experienced and successful teachers, facilitators will play an integral role in the success of the Occupational License New Teacher Training by leading sessions that support a CTE teacher's ability to plan instruction and manage their classroom. Our training approach focuses on a small number of skills which we believe teachers must acquire before entering the classroom.

Access the OLNTT Facilitator description [here](#).

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## T.C.A. 49-6-412: Career Assessment Guidance

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, Director of Schools, Educators, Principals

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

TCA 49-6-412 requires each LEA to administer a career assessment in grades seven or eight "in order to help inform a student's high school plan of study" and that the Tennessee Department of Education shall "identify career assessments that LEAs may administer for purposes of this subsection."

The department conducted an analysis of currently available career assessments both on the market or offered for free online. A full list of approved career assessments and the criteria used for their analysis can be found on the [CCTE website](#).

For further questions or guidance, please reach out to [Liza Ambrose](#), Program Manager for Career Readiness.

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## Fall STE(A)M Resource Hub Themes and Descriptions for September

**Audience:** CTE Educators and Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN) have released the Fall STE(A)M Resource Hub themes and descriptions for September. The Fall STE(A)M Resource Hub engages students with challenges around design activities, critical thinking, and career exploration throughout the month of September.

- **Sept. 20 - 24: National Construction Week**

- National Construction Week occurs on the 3rd week of September every year! This is a relatively new celebratory week, established in 2016. This special week we'll explore the work of dedicated people who develop the infrastructure we depend upon. Experiment with how infrastructure is created and maintained. Imagine how important construction is to our everyday life. We depend on it for transportation, manufacturing, commerce, and more. And with so many opportunities for employment, maybe you'll find a career path in construction where you build your future and the future of infrastructure!
- **Sept. 27 – Oct. 1 : Welcome Fall!**
  - Welcome Fall! It's nearly time for sweaters, apple cider, pumpkin pie, and falling leaves. Autumn is nearly upon us and that means changing temperatures as well as shifts in the crops farmers grow, the movement of the sun, and changes in plant life. This week learn more about the science of seasonal changes, record and predict effects of seasonal changes, and consider what careers might be effected.

For more information click the following [link](#).

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## September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

**Audience:** Principals, Teachers, Support Staff

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

As we enter suicide awareness month, the Division of Student and Family Supports wants to provide every school district with a [resource handout](#) for virtual or physical placement throughout Tennessee public schools. This is a visual reminder for youth and a quick way to increase access to professional crisis support.

In addition to the handout, here are two resources available to all youth and staff in need:

- [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:](#) [REDACTED]
  - This resource is available 24/7 and is free and confidential.
- [The TN Statewide Crisis Line:](#) [REDACTED]
  - All calls are routed to a trained crisis counselor in your area, who will provide you with support and guidance, and work to connect you with appropriate community supports.

## Mark Your Calendars: EPSO Week is October 18–22!

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, Director of Schools, District Staff, Educators, Principals, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Our annual EPSO (Early Postsecondary Opportunities) Week will take place **October 18-22** to expand and promote early postsecondary opportunities for your students. Complete the [EPSO Week Registration Form found here](#) by **Thursday, Sept. 30**, and the Early Postsecondary Team will provide schools with a checklist with helpful reminders and tools to use throughout the week. Follow @tnedu on Twitter and use the hashtag #EPSOWeek2021 to win prizes and giveaways by sharing creative ways your school promotes EPSOs!

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## Boot Camp for New Family Resource Center Directors

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Family Resource Center Directors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Division of Student and Family Supports will offer a virtual Boot Camp for new Family Resource Center (FRC) Directors. Our FRC Boot Camp provides new FRC Directors with strategies, tools, and best practices to ensure success in their initial first three months. This boot camp is for new FRC directors beginning this school year or FRC Directors who may have begun in the previous school year. Registered participants will receive a link to join the Microsoft TEAMS event before the event date.

Mark your calendar for the following date and register below:

- Oct. 6: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. CT

New FRC Directors can register [here](#) to attend the boot camp.

## Educators

*Tennessee will set a new path for the education profession and be the top state to become and remain a teacher and leader.*

### Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) for Beginning Principals and Assistant Principals

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, Instructional Supervisors, TASL Configurators

**Contact:** [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

TASL Academy registration for the 2021-22 school year for beginning principals and assistant principals is now closed. All qualified participants have been contacted and we are sharing all necessary details directly with the cohorts. TASL Academy for Beginning Principals and Assistant Principals will be held virtually for the 2021-22 school year.

This virtual offering will ensure flexibility in scheduling and maximum participation for those who need to complete the academies. The scheduled session modules are listed below. The session release and end dates are the same for Beginning Principals and Assistant Principals. TASL Academy office hours and synchronous learning sessions will be held every month to answer questions, deepen the learning, and offer an opportunity for participants to have a thought partner in applying theory to leadership practices.

Additionally, leaders will engage in discourse and glean information regarding the module objectives. Further details will be forthcoming regarding session sign up, and times for office hours and synchronous sessions.

- TASL Overview and Info Session: September 29 & 30, 2021
- Session 1: October 11 – October 22, 2021
- Session 2: November 8 – November 19, 2021
- Session 3: December 6 – December 17, 2021
- Session 4: January 10 – January 21, 2022
- Session 5: February 7 – February 18, 2022
- Session 6: March 7 – March 18, 2022
- Session 7: April 4 – April 15, 2022

Modules open at 8:00 a.m. CST on the first day of the session window and close at 5:00 p.m. CST on the last day of the window. Work is completed asynchronously on the department's learning management system. Participants have flexibility within the window to complete the work on their own time knowing that everything must be submitted before 5:00 p.m. on the closing date of that session.

**Note:** TASL Academy for Supervisors will launch in January 2022 and runs during the spring semester only. This program is for those in TASL mandated instructional supervisory roles who hold an active TN administrator's license. More information will be forthcoming.

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## SPED and ESL Additional Endorsement Grant Opportunity—Self-Registration Window Open for Licensed Tennessee Educators

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, HR Directors, Special Education Directors, ESL/ELL Directors, Principals, Teachers

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The department is pleased to announce a new **Special Education** and **English as a Second Language Additional Endorsement Grant** partnership with **Trevecca Nazarene University** and **University of Tennessee-Knoxville**. This grant provides the opportunity for up to **2,400 educators** to add an endorsement in either **Special Education (SPED)** or **English as a Second Language (ESL)** over the course of the 2021-22 school year.

Coursework will begin in October 2021 and will be offered in an **online, asynchronous** format at no cost to participants. Grant funds will also cover the cost of one administration of a required licensure assessment. For the SPED additional endorsement opportunities being offered, either LEAs or participants will be responsible for covering the cost of 1 required PRAXIS exam prior to earning endorsement. Participants completing the SPED additional endorsement program will also have the opportunity to serve on a provisional Special Education endorsement if they so choose.

With **2,400** total seats available across all 4 programs, the Department hopes to enroll roughly **600** educators on an annual basis in each of the additional endorsement areas covered as part of the grant award, as listed below:

Endorsement Area	Endorsement Code
Special Education Interventionist K-8	144
Special Education Interventionist 6-12	145
Special Education Comprehensive K-12	461

### English as a Second Language\*

Endorsement Area	Endorsement Code
English as a Second Language Pre-K-12	490

\***Note:** The English as a Second Language additional endorsement pathway being offered as part of this grant opportunity is currently **at capacity**. Interested participants should complete the waitlist registration form linked below. Participants will be added from the **waitlist** as space allows based on the order in which they submit their name and information.

### Participant Self-Registration: Due by September 30, 2021

In order to register for participation in one of these additional endorsement opportunities, currently licensed Tennessee educators should complete one of the relevant forms below by **Thursday, September 30, 2021**.

### Special Education Self-Registration Forms:

- [Special Education Interventionist 6-12 Additional Endorsement Participant Registration Form](#)

- [Special Education Comprehensive K-12 Additional Endorsement Participant Registration Form](#)

### Special Education Interventionist K-8 Waitlist Registration Form:

- [Special Education Interventionist K-8 Additional Endorsement Waitlist Registration Form](#)

### English as a Second Language Waitlist Registration Form:

- [English as a Second Language Participant Registration Form](#)

Seats in each endorsement pathway will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, until all seats are filled.

Please note: those individuals who have already been nominated by their LEAs for this opportunity, or for another additional endorsement opportunity being offered by TDOE, will not be eligible for self-registration at this time.

With questions, please contact [REDACTED].

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## PAEMST Awards: 2022 Nominations Now Open

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Principals, School Administrators, Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The **Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST)** are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K–12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science teaching.

Anyone—principals, teachers, parents, students, or members of the general public—may nominate exceptional STEM teachers who are currently teaching grades K-6 for the 2022 award year. Teachers may also apply directly [here](#).

Presidential Awardees receive a certificate signed by the President of the United States; a trip to Washington, D.C., to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities; and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation. They also join a network of award-winning teachers from across the country. The National Science Foundation administers PAEMST on the behalf of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The **nomination deadline is January 7, 2022**, and the **application deadline is February 6, 2022** for elementary teachers (grades K-6). Secondary teachers (grades 7-12) will be eligible to apply during a future cycle.

With questions, please contact Tennessee PAEMST coordinator, [Janelle Brown](#).

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## TDOE Offers Three Initiatives to Support Recruitment and Hiring

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, HR Directors, Educators, Principals, Teachers

**Contact:** [REDACTED]



Since May 2020, Tennessee Department of Education has launched three initiatives to support districts and schools in filling critical vacancies, as the COVID-19 pandemic has limited many traditional recruitment methods. We are excited to continue these initiatives in 2021.

The [TN Substitute Teacher Jobs Connection](#) supports districts in their recruitment efforts by providing a central location for interested applicants to discover substitute teaching opportunities in the state's schools and districts. TDOE would also like to thank Governor Bill Lee's Office for launching a LinkedIn campaign to support this initiative. Over **1,075** substitute teachers have submitted their information so far!

The [TN Education Job Board](#) highlights openings for available district positions and provides contact information all in one location. The Board also includes a list of feature jobs that have been identified as critical vacancies. There are currently **over 175** posted and featured education jobs from districts across the state. District information will also continue to be updated on a regular basis as submissions are received.

The [TN Teacher Jobs Connection](#) serves as a central location for interested applicants to connect with teaching opportunities in the state's 147 districts. Any educator interested in a new teaching role in Tennessee is welcome to submit their information to the department through the [form](#). Since May 2020, we have received over **3,450** submissions from teachers, administrators, and education professionals from across the country! You can read more about this initiative and its impact [here](#).

Read more about these recruitment initiatives [here](#).

## Supporting Work

### ★ 2021 LEA Compliance Report

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Districts are required to comply with all federal and state education laws and State Board of Education (SBE) rules. The commissioner of education is responsible for ensuring school laws and SBE rules are executed as well as taking corrective action when a district is noncompliant with those laws and rules or is not following a department-approved compliance plan.

The LEA Compliance Report is a document used by the department in its annual process of ensuring compliance. All districts are required to complete the [report](#), including the [corrective action plan template](#) if applicable, and upload it to ePlan (instructions [here](#)) by **November 30**.

### ★ ARP Homeless 2.0 Application Opened Sept. 1

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Homeless Liaisons*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On April 23, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced the availability of \$800 million to support the identification, enrollment, participation, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness and to provide them with wrap-around services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) § 2001(b)(1) authorizes the ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP Homeless) Fund. ARP Homeless funding is being allocated to states through two separate awards: ARP Homeless 1.0 and ARP Homeless 2.0.

ED also established that an LEA must have an allocation of at least \$5,000 under the formula to be eligible for an ARP Homeless 2.0 sub grant on its own. If an LEA's allocation is less than \$5,000,

to receive an ARP Homeless 2.0 sub grant, the LEA must join a consortium of LEAs in which the sum of its members' allocations meets the \$5,000 threshold. A consortium is made up of two or more LEAs that collaborate to meet the needs of homeless students within each LEA or the consortium as a whole. LEAs that generate more than \$5,000 are considered stand-alone LEAs but may serve as a fiscal agent to LEAs who do not meet their \$5,000 threshold requirement. A fiscal agent is an LEA within an ARP Homeless 2.0 consortium responsible for managing all the member LEA's ARP 2.0 funds and distributing funds to each member LEA accordingly. More information about consortium options will be shared with impacted LEAs soon.

LEAs were notified of their ARP Homeless 2.0 allocation awards on Aug. 9, 2021, via email. A live webinar on ARP Homeless 2.0 funding was held on Monday, Aug. 23, 2021. This webinar covered the allowable use of funds, fiscal considerations, and detailed instructions on how to complete the application in ePlan. The slide deck from the ARP Homeless 2.0 webinar can be found [here](#). The slide deck can also be found in [ePlan > TDOE Resources > ARP Homeless > ARP Homeless 2.0](#). The ARP Homeless 2.0 Technical Application Guide can be found [here](#). The Technical Guide contains important information such as steps for completing the ARP Homeless 2.0 application, consortia and fiscal agent information, budgets and budget tags, and allowable use of funds.

The ARP Homeless 2.0 application opened in ePlan on **Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021**, and is due **Oct. 1, 2021**. **All LEAs, including those who plan to release funds, must complete the application as outlined in the [ARP Homeless 2.0 Technical Application Guide](#).**

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## Updated Lead in Drinking Water Reporting

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools & Designated District Personnel*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-2-133](#), local boards of education are required to develop a policy to implement a program to reduce the potential sources of lead contamination in drinking water in public schools. The policy must require periodic testing of lead levels in drinking water sources at school facilities and specific actions depending upon the results of the tests. If the result of a lead level test is equal to or exceeds twenty parts per billion (20 ppb), LEAs shall submit an online form through [Formstack](#). Today, September 23, the online form was updated and LEAs will no longer upload testing results. The form now contains fields that will collect information on testing, including total number of fixtures tested, and elevated results.

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## Opportunity for Free Water Lead Testing

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Health is offering water lead testing to schools, Head Start/Early Head Start facilities and Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) licensed childcare centers at no cost. Participating facilities will be provided a lead testing kit with bottles, instructions, and pre-paid return shipping labels. Testing results will be shared with the facility as soon as possible, but no later than two weeks following the completion of testing. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation will provide technical assistance to facilities for responding to test results and addressing elevated lead levels when necessary.

Additional information about this funding opportunity can be accessed [here](#). To request a lead testing kit, contact the Tennessee Department of Health Laboratory Services staff by phone at (615) 262-6300 or by email at [REDACTED].

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## LEA Approval of InformTN School Plans: Due October 1

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Supervisors*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The final step in the annual school planning process is the review and approval of school plans by the LEA. District leaders may use the school planning [rubric](#), previously shared in School Planning Resources for District Leaders, to support their review. School plans must be reviewed and approved by **October 1**. The 2021-22 planning dates can be found [here](#).

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## FY21 ESEA Waiver Requests

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Federal Program Directors*

**Contact:** [ESEA Divisional Coordinators](#)

Due to the continued extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-21 school year, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) is offering a waiver for an State educational agency (SEA) to be able to approve a local educational agency (LEA) to carry over more than **15 percent of its federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 Title I, Part A funds** (i.e., the **2020-21 Title I, Part A funds that will become carryover funds on October 1, 2021**), even if the LEA has received a waiver from its SEA to exceed this limitation for its FFY 2018 or FFY 2019 Title I, Part A funds.

Second, ED is offering flexibility to each SEA to be able to extend for itself and its subgrantees the period of availability of FFY 2019 (**funds awarded to LEAs July 1, 2019, for the 2019-20 school year**) funds for programs included in the State's consolidated State plan to allow additional time to obligate those funds. This extension applies to:

- Title I, Part A of the ESEA (Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs), including the portions of the SEA's Title I, Part A award used to carry out section 1003 school improvement
- Title I, Part D, Subpart 1 of the ESEA (SEA funds for Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk) - DOC/DCS only
- Title I, Part D, Subpart 2 of the ESEA (LEA funds for Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk)
- Title II, Part A of the ESEA (Supporting Effective Instruction)
- Title III, Part A of the ESEA (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement)
- Title IV, Part A of the ESEA (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants)
- Title IV, Part B of the ESEA (21st Century Community Learning Centers)
- Title V, Part B, Subpart 2 of the ESEA (Rural and Low-Income School Program)
- Lottery for Education Afterschool Program (LEAP)
- McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

Additionally, waivers are available for the 25 percent Title III, Part A and Title IX, Part A McKinney-Vento state carryover limit (Carryover limitation for **FFY20 [funds awarded to LEAs July 1, 2020, for the 2020-21 school year]** Title III, Part A and Title IX, Part A funds that will become carryover funds on Oct. 1, 2021). LEAs and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) may also apply for a waiver to remove limits on the amount of Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers) or LEAP funds that can be carried over into the 2021-22 school year.

**LEAs are encouraged to take advantage of this flexibility and to ensure all Title I funds are meaningfully obligated and expended.** To apply for a waiver LEAs must complete a Federal Program Waiver Request in ePlan by **Sept. 30, 2021**. Detailed instructions on how to complete a request can be found [here](#). More information about available waivers can be found [here](#).

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## New On-Demand PD and Resources in Active Students, Active Learners

**Audience:** *District and School Level Administration*

**Contact:** 

Some recent updates to the [Active Students, Active Learners website](#) include:

- 24 live webinar recordings from the “Active Students, Active Learners: Virtual PD Week” are now available as [on-demand learning modules](#) for PD credit through April 30. These webinars were designed to connect all teachers, lead educators, principals, administrators, and support staff with resources and instructional strategies for creating and supporting a physically active school culture and learning environment. Certificates for professional learning hours are automatically generated at the successful completion of each module.
  - [Research and data](#) supporting physical activity in all areas of a school culture, including during instructional hours.
  - See where Tennessee’s Social and Personal Competencies naturally fit within K-12 physical education instruction using [this crosswalk](#), as well as other [state specific resources for PE/PA](#).
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## FY22 Safe Schools Application

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, SAVE Act Coordinators*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Before adjourning, the General Assembly appropriated \$20 million in recurring funds for FY 22 school safety grants. As in prior years, the final funding and match amounts for Safe Schools will not be available until the BEP is finalized; however, districts may use their FY 21 grant amounts as an estimate. A timeline of the application process is below:

- July 19, 2021 Safe Schools application released in ePlan
- August 1, 2021 Final Expense Report for FY21 Safe Schools application due in ePlan
- September 30, 2021 Deadline for receipt of Safe Schools application

Additional information regarding the application can be found [here](#).

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## Re-Opening of Virtual School Application

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

To provide additional flexibilities for virtual learning at this time, the department is re-opening the virtual school application for districts interested in opening a new virtual school or expanding an existing virtual school. Districts should complete the [Updated Program and School Authorization Form](#). Specific instructions for completing the form are provided [here](#). Districts seeking to expand an existing virtual school may add up to three (3) grades to the grade span currently served.

Forms should be submitted to [REDACTED] with a copy to [REDACTED]. The department will be accepting applications on a rolling basis. Upon receipt of all required materials and any clarifications, the virtual school or expansion will be authorized and may be implemented immediately. For more information, contact [Matt Bowser](#).

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## TDOE & T-Mobile Continue T-Mobile Tech for TN Students

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Last year, the Tennessee Department of Education [announced](#) a new five-year partnership, T-Mobile Tech for TN Students, allowing school districts across the state to have access to over 200,000 student connectivity devices that can be provided directly to families at no cost to them.

Year two of the program has started for the 2021-22 school year and applications are now open for districts that would like to receive additional devices or districts that would like to participate for the first time. A district informational webinar session will be available to answer any questions. **The webinar will take place today, September 23rd at 1:00 p.m.** To register, click [here](#).

Information and district applications are available on the department's [T-Mobile Tech for TN Students webpage](#).

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## Assessment and Accountability

### Spring 2021 TCAP Family Portal Data Now Available

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Educators*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Each year, TCAP tests are designed to assess what our students know and what we can do to help them succeed in the future. They provide feedback about students' academic progress and how it aligns with grade-level expectations. Now families can find detailed, personalized, information about their child's progress on the TCAP Family Portal.

Here are some ways to use the TCAP Family Portal:

- Identify student strengths and next steps for areas to improve in the future.
- Use information presented in the portal to engage in conversations with educators about your student's academic progress.
- Track progress over time with a "Test History" feature.
- Find helpful links to department TCAP resources.

Families can register [here](#) with their student's USID number. Data from the spring 2021 testing went live in the portal on Friday, July 30 for TCAP and became available on August 20 for TCAP-Alternate. Use the seven-digit number found on your student's ISR and add two zeroes in front of that number. The resulting nine-digit number will enable you to create an account for your student. For example, a state ID 1234567 would become [REDACTED].

A toolkit to support districts in communicating about this resource is available [here](#), including the Family Portal FAQ available [here](#). Videos to help users in navigating the portal are available on [Best for All Central](#).

Districts may access the TCAP Family Portal Help Guide and the TCAP Educator Portal Help Guide on [LiveBinders](#).

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### National Assessment Governing Board Nominations

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, District Testing Coordinators, Special Population Coordinators*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which develops policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), is seeking candidates for several positions (to be appointed in fall 2022), including fourth-grade teacher, eighth-grade teacher, secondary school principal, and general public representative-parent leader.

Candidates can nominate themselves or be nominated by someone else. **Board nominations must be submitted online by Nov. 1, 2021.**

You can learn more about the open positions, Board members' responsibilities, and the submission requirements [here](#). This is a great opportunity to have the voice of Tennessee and your community represented on our national stage. All interested educators are encouraged to apply.

## In Case You Missed It

### District Information Dashboard & Attendance Coding

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Department has relaunched the District Information Dashboard for the 2021-2022 School Year. In addition to providing reporting on COVID counts in schools/districts, the dashboard will provide federal reporting requirements required under ESSER. You can find the dashboard at: <https://districtinformation.tnedu.gov>.

#### **New on the dashboard this year:**

- If your district offers remote instruction during quarantine, you will be able to flag that information on the district information page.
- ESSER Allocations: The dashboard will provide a sum of ESSER 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 plans submitted by the district and approved by the state. This data will come straight from ePlan and will not require any input from the district.
- Enrollment and Attendance information: After the 15th of each month, the dashboard will provide a view of enrollment and attendance data submitted by the district through your student information systems into EIS.
- Waiver information: On a school level, if you are granted a waiver, this information will be inputted by the department and reflected on the school listing within the district.
- Links to ESSER document and response plans: The dashboard will provide links to your ESSER plan documents as well as your publicly posted, locally adopted COVID mitigation strategies and your ESSER-required health and safety plan. We ask that you submit the links to those documents for the department to link to your district profile by filling out the survey here.

Like last year, COVID counts should be entered by the district representative no later than 5 p.m. CT on Mondays for confirmed COVID cases in the schools during the previous week. **ANY DATA ENTERED AFTER 5 p.m. CT WILL NOT REFLECT ON THE DASHBOARD for the previous week.**

For attendance coding, which will be reflected on the dashboard, the EIS attendance code D, Distance Learning, was introduced last year to assist districts across the state as students transitioned to a distance learning model. In order to support State Rule 0520-01-13-.01(1)(d), the D attendance code will be updated as follows for the 2021-22 school year: D, Distance Learning/Virtual Classrooms Due to Quarantine.

The D attendance code will continue to be used for positive attendance reporting to track students that are participating in district sponsored remote learning based on local school board policy.

In order to ensure students are counted present accurately during any remote instruction period, there are 3 scenarios under which the "D" code shall be used for positive attendance reporting:

- Individual student that are quarantining due to COVID
- Classrooms that are utilizing remote learning with an approved Commissioner waiver.
- Schools that are utilizing remote learning with an approved Commissioner waiver.

Districts that are not offering remote instruction for students who are quarantined due to COVID should be counted as absent (A).

If you or your designated representative do not have access to the dashboard, please contact the District Technology Help Desk at [REDACTED] and complete the access request form.

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## TDOE Announces School Designations for 2020–21 School Year

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Tuesday, Sept. 14, the Tennessee Department of Education announced the school designations for the 2020-21 school year, which include 188 Reward schools spanning 61 districts statewide.

In addition to recognizing Reward schools, the department also named schools that have improved and earned their way off of the Priority list. Priority schools, federally known as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, were identified for poor academic performance at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. Focus schools, which are either Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI), could also exit if they met the respective exit criteria.

The complete list of Reward schools and schools exiting Priority or Focus status is posted on the [department's website](#).

Learn more [here](#).

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## TDOE Remote Learning Waiver Letter and Application

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

For cases where districts can demonstrate and document COVID-related needs in their school communities that necessitate a temporary shift to remote instruction for classrooms or entire schools, Commissioner Schwinn will entertain waiver requests for districts to provide temporary remote instruction due to COVID-19 at the classroom and school level.

This waiver process is not required for individual students on quarantine to receive remote instruction, and waivers, if approved, will be valid for up to seven calendar days. The department will review waiver requests three times a day at 9am, 12 noon, and 3pm CT and respond in writing to the district as quickly as possible.

The commissioner of education is authorized by state law and state board of education (SBE) rule to grant waivers of certain statutes and SBE rules to local education agencies (LEAs) upon request. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-203 and SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.12(6), the department will post any approved waivers within five (5) business days of the commissioner's approval to our website. The waivers shall include the name of the LEA requesting the waiver and an explanation of the waiver requested.

All waiver requests and responses related to the COVID-19 Remote Learning Waiver will be posted daily at 5:30 p.m. CT. Waivers that come in after 5:30 p.m. will be posted the following day. They will be accessible through [this link](#) at the very bottom of the webpage.

The letter Commissioner Schwinn shared with directors about the application and process can be found [here](#) and the LEA COVID-19 Relief waiver request application can be found [here](#).

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# September 2021 is Tennessee Literacy Month!

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Educators, Students, Community Members

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Today, the Tennessee Department of Education [announced](#) the state is celebrating Tennessee Literacy Month throughout the month of September, highlighting the state's focus on early literacy through strategic investments and optional, free resources to help students boost literacy rates and help teachers improve reading comprehension for early learners.

[Governor Bill Lee proclaimed](#) September as Tennessee Literacy Month, and throughout the month, the department is highlighting how reading is for all students. We will be sharing exciting new announcements and highlighting the already incredible work happening around [Reading 360](#), the state's comprehensive literacy initiative.

The department is also excited to introduce [Riley the Reading Raccoon](#), a cartoon mascot for reading to help emphasize the importance of early literacy for our youngest students. Using the hashtag #TNReadingForALL, Tennessee families can follow Riley on social media throughout the month to learn Riley's favorite book and favorite place to read, and why Riley loves reading.



Special shout out to Overton County Schools for celebrating with us this month. Educators and students have shared their love of learning through various activities with a fun theme- camping.

Please share a short video of why you love reading and how important early literacy is. You can also send a photo of your favorite book or favorite place to read and we will highlight your submission on social media. Please include your name and county where you live and email your submission to [REDACTED]. We hope you'll join us this month and share your love for reading by using [these graphics](#) on your social channels!

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# 2022 Tennessee Superintendent of the Year Announced: Dr. Ted Horrell, Lakeland School System

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Sunday, September 12, Dr. Ted Horrell, Director of Lakeland School System, was named the 2022 Tennessee Superintendent of the Year at the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS) annual awards banquet during the annual Superintendent Study Council Conference in Gatlinburg.

Dr. Horrell was selected for this honor from a distinguished group of eight Regional Superintendents of the Year, which included:

- Dr. Jimmy Carter, Union County Schools, East region
- Dr. Jeff Moorhouse, Kingsport City Schools, First region
- Millard House, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, Mid-Cumberland region
- Dr. Leah Watkins, Henry County Schools, Northwest region
- Dr. Joey Vaughn, Manchester City Schools, South Central region
- Dr. Linda Cash, Bradley County Schools, Southeast region
- Corby King, Putnam County Schools, Upper Cumberland region



Learn more [here](#).

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## 1000+ Tennessee High Schoolers from 100+ School Districts Begin Free Online AP Courses Through AP Access for ALL

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Educators, Students, Community Members

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Earlier this month, the Tennessee Department of Education, in partnership with the Niswonger Foundation, announced the launch of the state's new AP Access for ALL program, which is providing online advanced placement courses this school year for nearly 1,200 high school students representing 102 school districts across Tennessee.

AP Access for ALL is a grant program created by the Tennessee Department of Education and administered by its partner the Niswonger Foundation to provide students across the state with access to virtual AP courses, eliminating financial barriers and supporting student enrollment in AP coursework not currently offered at their home high school.

Since June, AP Access for ALL has successfully onboarded over 75% of school districts that include high schools to participate in the program. Of the 102 participating districts, 21 districts are in counties classified as at-risk or distressed and 38 are rural districts. Students in these participating districts, many of whom previously had no access or only limited access to advanced placement courses, can now choose from [14 different advanced placement courses](#) and earn free college credit while in high school.

For a full list of participating counties, courses offered, and more information, visit [tnapaccessforall.org](https://tnapaccessforall.org). Learn more [here](#).

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## Free ACT Retake Opportunities Available for All Tennessee High School Seniors to Help Boost Scores

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Earlier this month, the Tennessee Department of Education [highlighted](#) an opportunity this fall for all high school seniors to boost their scores on the ACT college entrance exam after taking the test the first time as a junior during the COVID-19 pandemic. While a [recent ACT, Inc. study](#) found that the 2020-21 ACT results indicated an anticipated decline in ACT scores nationwide, Tennessee is the first and only state to offer this free retake opportunity to every Tennessee high school senior this fall.

This year, the department is urging all Tennessee high school seniors to take advantage of the fall ACT retake opportunity and has expanded the state testing windows to provide additional options. ACT Inc.'s research shows that students who take the ACT more than once increase their score by an average of 1 point. Students who improve their scores in one or more subject areas tested will have their super-score composite available to send to postsecondary institutions and scholarship programs.

Districts across the state will be able to offer the free fall ACT retake opportunities during one of the following three-day windows:

- October 5-7, 2021
- October 19-21, 2021
- November 2-4, 2021

For more information, click [here](#).

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# PBS Programming Continues During September Statewide

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, Educators, Families

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

During the month of September, the department continues to provide academic instructional videos airing on PBS statewide, which provide video lessons for Pre-K-2 students. Additionally, there are math video lessons for specific grades.

Families can watch these instructional video lessons created specifically for Tennessee students on all six state PBS stations – WNPT Nashville, East Tennessee PBS, WCTE Upper Cumberland, WKNO Memphis, West TN PBS, and Chattanooga WTCL from 9 a.m. –11 a.m. CST.

The schedule for September can be found on the [department's website](#). PBS Teaching Tennessee classroom lessons for 1st-8th grade students can be found on the [department's YouTube page](#). All 320 lessons have companion teacher lesson plans and student packets. Learn more [here](#).

## Dates to Remember:

*\* Dates are subject to change as things continue to update. Please check the department's [online calendar](#) for updated dates.*

- **September 23:** South Central and Southeast School Counselor Regional Roundtable
- **September 23:** T-Mobile Tech for TN Students Webinar
- **September 23:** 2020-21 State Report Card Release
- **September 23:** Defined Careers and ElevateTN Webinar
- **September 24:** FAST Review/State Aid Legislative Updates Webinar
- **September 29 & 30:** TASL Overview and Info Session
- **September 30:** Participant Self-Registration for New SPED & ESL Endorsements Deadline
- **September 30:** Volunteer Tennessee's Award of Excellence Applications Deadline
- **September 30:** EPSO Week Registration Form Deadline
- **September 30:** Federal Program Waiver Request Deadline
- **September 30:** STEM/STE(A)M School Designation Intent to Apply Deadline
- **September 30:** Deadline for Receipt of Safe Schools Application
- **October 1:** ARP Homeless 2.0 Application Deadline
- **October 1:** Happy FAFSA Season Webinar
- **October 1:** LEA Approval of InformTN School Plans Deadline
- **October 6:** Family Resource Center Directors Boot Camp Registration
- **October 11-22:** TASL Academy Session 1
- **October 14:** HS School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant Intent to Apply
- **October 14:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Intent to Apply
- **October 15:** United State Senate Youth Program Application Deadline
- **October 18:** TVA STEM Classroom Grant Program Application Deadline
- **October 18:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Applications Available
- **October 18:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Applications Available
- **October 18-22:** Annual EPSO Week
- **November 1:** Deadline to submit NAGB Board Nominations
- **November 1:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Application Deadline

- **November 1:** HS School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant Application Deadline
- **November 6:** Presidential Scholars Application Deadline
- **November 8-19:** TASL Academy Session 2
- **November 30:** 2021-22 Growth and Achievement Measure Selections and Scales Deadline
- **November 30:** LEA Compliance Report Due Date
- **January 7:** 2022 PAEMST Awards Nomination Deadline
- **January 10-14:** 2022 Winter Occupational License New Teacher Training
- **February 6:** 2022 PAEMST Awards Application Deadline

[Click here to return to the top of the newsletter](#)



In case you missed it, click [here](#) to view last week's edition of this newsletter!

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**From:** Jason Golden <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 9/23/2021 6:45:35 AM  
**To:** CO Superintendent Group <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Commissioner's Update for Directors, September 23

---

Jason Golden  
Superintendent  
Williamson County Schools  
[REDACTED]

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Commissioner Schwinn <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** September 23, 2021 at 6:00:48 AM CDT  
**To:** Jason Golden <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Commissioner's Update for Directors, September 23  
**Reply-To:** Commissioner Schwinn <[REDACTED]>

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We will set all students on a path to success.

If we are successful, then Tennessee will see a substantial increase in the number of students on-track to meeting postsecondary goals two years after graduation.



- [Key Updates](#) - Receive information on Promising Results from Summer Programming, the 2020-21 State Report Card Release, Tennessee's Six National Blue Ribbon Schools, Reading 360 Model Districts, the Reading 360 Virtual Summit this week, and more.
- [Academics](#) - Receive information on the Presidential Scholars Application, Updated Tennessee Universal Reading Screener Resources, the TPAC Virtual Field Trip Opportunity, and more.
- [Student Readiness](#) - Learn about the Defined Careers and ElevateTN Webinar, the TVA STEM Classroom Grant Program Application, the 2021-22 Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grants, and more.
- [Educators](#) - Receive information on the TASL Academy Registration for 2021-22, the SPED and ESL Additional Endorsement Grant Opportunity, the PAEMST Award Nominations, and more.
- [Supporting Work](#) - Learn about the 2021 LEA Compliance Report, the ARP Homeless 2.0 Application, Lead in Drinking Water Reporting, Opportunity for Free Water Lead Testing, and Assessment and Accountability updates.
- [In Case You Missed It](#) - Catch up on updates from previous issues!



New item



Previously run announcement



Deadline before next update

## Key Updates

### Gov. Lee, TDOE Promising Results From Historic Special Session on Education

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [Redacted]

On Wednesday, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee Department of Education shared encouraging data around the state's more than \$160 million investment in

academic summer camps to address learning loss and accelerate achievement for Tennessee students.

Throughout the pandemic, Tennessee has led the nation in providing academic supports for students. In January 2021, Governor Lee convened the Tennessee General Assembly for a [special legislative session](#) to pass policies to mitigate COVID-19 disruptions and support Tennessee students.

### **Interventions for Summer Learning**

The [Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act](#) passed in special session provided funding to local school districts for K-8 academic summer camps across the state.

New data from summer camps will further inform how the state, schools, teachers and families can support student success.

### **Promising Results Include:**

#### **Strong Student Participation**

- This summer, both summer learning camps and after school STREAM camps had higher attendance in elementary grades compared to middle school grades.
- Overall, more than 120,000 Tennessee students enrolled in summer programming across the state.

#### **English and Language Arts:**

- Overall, data showed an improvement of 5.97 percentage point
- Elementary grades saw an improvement of 7.34 percentage point
- Middle school grades saw an improvement of 0.66 percentage points

#### **Math:**

- Overall, data showed an improvement of 10.49 percentage points
- Elementary grades saw an improvement of 11.66 percentage points
- Middle school grades saw an improvement of 6 percentage points

Commissioner Schwinn's presentation from the House Education Committees Summer Study on Wednesday, Sept. 22, can be found [here](#). Find the Accelerating TN Tour 2021: Bright Spots Guide [here](#).

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## **2020-21 State Report Card Release**

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** 

The [2020-21 State Report Card](#) will be launched later today. The State Report Card is a tool for parents and community members to have easy to understand information about Tennessee districts and schools. Prior to each Report Card's release, parents, educators, and community organizations provide feedback that help the department develop a

continually improving Report Card with a dashboard of key information about every school and district in the state.

This year's Report Card will have different amounts of information and data available due to the passage of [Public Chapter 2](#). A comprehensive press release and additional resources will be released later today from the department.

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## Six Tennessee Schools Recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Tuesday, September 21, the U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona [recognized](#) six Tennessee schools as [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) for 2021. The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student groups.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools from across the country on an annual basis. For the past 39 years, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has granted approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools, with some schools winning multiple awards. Schools are eligible for nomination after five years.

The following **Tennessee** schools have been selected as 2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools:

- Clovercroft Elementary School, Williamson County Schools
- Liberty Elementary School, Franklin Special School District
- Towne Acres Elementary School, Johnson City Schools
- Sam Houston Elementary School, Maryville City Schools
- Meigs Middle Magnet School, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
- Thrasher Elementary School, Hamilton County School

To learn more about the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, click [here](#).

---

## TDOE Announces Reading 360 Model Districts

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Last week, the department announced five districts have been recognized as Reading 360 Model Districts for their promising early literacy work- Bristol Tennessee City Schools, Jackson County Schools, Lebanon Special School District, Milan Special School District, and Williamson County Schools- and have been selected as Tennessee Model Foundational Skills Implementation District grant awardees for implementing the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement over the 2020-21 school year.

In July 2020, the department [released](#) the free, optional supplement to support early literacy, which follows evidenced-based research to build a solid foundation for literacy in pre-K through second grade.



Districts applied to be Reading 360 Model Implementation Districts for the TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement in the spring of 2021, and the five districts selected demonstrated a strong and clear focus on foundational literacy skills. Each of the five districts will receive a grant award of \$300,000 to support their ongoing implementation of foundational literacy skills as well as help the department collect model instructional videos for the implementation tools and resources that any district may use to support their own implementation of foundational literacy skills.

Read more [here](#).

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## Reading 360 Virtual Summit This Week

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Reading 360 Virtual Summit is underway, September 21 through September 23! The Summit is highlighting best practices for the Reading 360 comprehensive literacy initiative. Featuring six roundtable sessions with national literacy experts and Tennessee educators and breakout sessions that will further dive into the topics highlighted during the roundtable discussions, the summit will focus on foundational literacy skills instruction, high-quality materials implementation, family-community partnerships, and educator preparation. There is also a special track of sessions for districts participating in the Early Literacy Network.

Check out the [full agenda](#) to learn more. Follow updates and takeaways from the Summit on social media [here](#).

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## TN Chamber and TDOE Providing Resources to Build the Future Workforce for K-12 Schools

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry are working to make career awareness and preparation more seamless for students, parents, employers and educators. With the support of Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) the Chamber is offering the Tennessee Career Awareness & Preparation System ("TN-CAPS") and Learning Blade, to provide career-based curriculum for educators in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry is amplifying the effort by working with regional chambers to strengthen the connection between schools and local businesses and to aid in regional and statewide workforce development. There are over 130 businesses across Tennessee's 9 economic regions already registered in TN-CAPS. These businesses have indicated how they will engage with their local schools.

Both programs provide schools a free solution to the workforce "skills gap" by providing localized, demand-driven, student-centered resources.

For more information on the TN-CAPS, click [here](#). For more information on the Learning Blade, click [here](#) or contact [REDACTED].

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# Academics

All Tennessee students will have access to a high-quality education, no matter where they live.

## ★ Updated Tennessee Universal Reading Screener Resources

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Instructional Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED] Or [REDACTED]

### Overview

The TN Universal Reading Screener was released by the department to provide a free and optional reading and math screener to enable districts to comply with the requirements of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act. Districts may also choose to use the other State Board of Education-approved universal reading screeners to meet the screening requirements required by the act.

### Updated Matrix Guidance and Resources

In response to district feedback and engagement, as well as a review of all relevant laws and policies, the department is providing updated guidance and additional flexibility for districts related to the TN-URS and dyslexia screening. Please see [this guidance document](#) for more information and an updated TN-URS screening matrix.

All guidance documents, including the [Universal Reading Screener Administration: Requirements for Universal Reading Screeners](#), are publicly posted on the [2021 Special Session Legislation Resources webpage](#).

### Support and Training

Support is available through weekly office hours every Friday from 10-11 a.m. CT. Join by using this [link](#).

### Contact Information

With questions or for more information about the Universal Reading Screener, please reach out to [REDACTED].

## ★ Presidential Scholars Application Window Now Open

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, School Counselors and CTE Directors

**Contact:** [REDACTED] Or [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Education is excited to share an opportunity for each Tennessee high school to nominate a maximum of two seniors to be considered as state finalists for the U.S. Presidential Scholars program. One senior may be nominated from each school for the general academic component of the program, and one senior may be nominated for the CTE component of the program.

### General Academic Component

Our state can nominate high school seniors to be considered based on academic success and perseverance. The general academic component emphasizes the following areas on the application:

- Academic achievement
- Leadership skills
- Community involvement
- Overcoming obstacles
- Strong writing skills

The school principal, guidance counselor, or other designee may assist the student nominee with the completion of the online academic component state application, linked [here](#). Applications are due by **5 p.m. CT on November 6, 2021**.

### **CTE Component**

Our state can nominate high school seniors to be considered based on excellence in career and technical education (CTE). This component emphasizes the following areas on the application:

- Academic rigor
- Technical competence
- Employability skills
- Ingenuity and creativity

The school principal, guidance counselor, or other designee may assist the student nominee with the completion of the online CTE component state application, linked [here](#). Applications are due by **5 p.m. CT on November 6, 2021**.

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## **TPAC: Virtual Field Trip Opportunity Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers**

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Instructional Supervisors, District Arts Coordinators, Principals, Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

*The following is a message from our partners at the [Tennessee Performing Arts Center](#):*

In order to continue serving as a resource to schools, the Tennessee Performing Arts Center will continue to offer virtual field trip and enrichment opportunities during the fall. The first virtual offering for this school year is a free performance of *Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers®*.

### **Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers® – Virtual Performance:**

- **Available dates:** September 20-October 8, 2021
  - You will be provided a link to access the video during the entire show window. The performance is approximately 60 minutes in length.
- **Cost:** Free
- **Suggested Grades:** 5th grade and up
- **Booking:** Request a reservation online [here](#). After booking, you will be given a link to access the performance video.
  - Please note the video is presented through Vimeo. TPAC recommends checking ahead of time to determine if you can access Vimeo on school devices and/or working with district technology support to set up access to the platform.

- **Show Description:** In Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Dr. Paul T. Kwami and his students explore the stories of the original nine members of the world-renowned ensemble. Inviting viewers to share in their unique bond and learn the significance of spirituals in today's culture, the students reflect on their roles as preservers of the group's legacy. Created in collaboration with Dr. Kwami and director Jon Royal, the film is produced by Tennessee Performing Arts Center.

For more information about this virtual field trip opportunity or other TPAC educational enrichment programs, reach out to [Cassie LaFevor](#), TPAC Director of Education Enrichment, or by calling (615) 687-4288.

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## CLASS Sampling of VPK Classrooms

**Audience:** Director of Schools, VPK Directors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Early Learning Division will conduct observations in VPK classrooms using Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). These observations will be scheduled for **September 13-30, 2021**. These observations will be conducted in-person in 20% (186 total) of VPK classrooms selected at random. District VPK directors will be given a two-week window for when the observations will occur.

For more information on these observations, districts may reach out to their assigned early childhood quality and support specialist or to [Misty Moody](#).

---

## TN Arts Commission: Rolling Grant Funds for Arts Integration Projects

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Instructional Supervisors, District Arts Coordinators, Principals, Arts Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

*The following is a message from our partners at the [Tennessee Arts Commission](#):*

Applications for the [Arts Education Mini-Grant](#) opened Wednesday, September 1, 2021. This Rolling Grant program provides funds to Tennessee schools and nonprofit organizations for projects to improve instruction and increase student outcomes through arts integration. Eligible activities include:

- Hands-on training opportunities in arts integration techniques for arts specialists, classroom teachers, teaching artists, and/or arts education staff of nonprofit organizations.
- Arts-integrated classroom residencies in partnership with a professional teaching artist or nonprofit organization.

For more information, application guidelines are detailed [here](#).

Key guidelines to note:

- Applicants can request \$3,000-\$5,000.
- Applications must be received at least 30 days before the project start date.
- Awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants submitting complete and eligible materials.

With questions, reach out to [Alicia Fuss](#), TN Arts Commission Arts Education Director.

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## 2021-22 United States Senate Youth Program Application Opens

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, High School Counselors, High School Teachers

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The application for the 2021-22 United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is open. This opportunity is open to junior or senior high school students. Two students will be selected as Tennessee delegates to participate in the annual Washington Week experience which includes a variety of events that promote a unique understanding of the structure of the United States government.

The program sponsor, the Hearst Foundation, also offers selected state finalists a \$10,000 undergraduate scholarship.

Additional information, including the application link, can be found [here](#). Student applications are due by **11:59 p.m. CT on October 15, 2021**.

## Student Readiness

*Tennessee public schools will be equipped to serve the academic and non-academic needs of all students in their career pathways.*

## STEM/STE(A)M School Designation Intent to Apply Now Open!

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, Director of Schools, District staff, Educators, Principals, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The 2021-22 STEM/STE(A)M School Designation Intent to Apply is now open through **Thursday, September 30!** The Designation process recognizes school-wide STEM/STE(A)M integration models. Schools that earn STEM and STE(A)M Designation receive \$10,000 grants to expand integrated learning through Governor Lee's Future Workforce Initiative. STEM/STE(A)M education provides an opportunity for every student to discover and explore postsecondary paths and to become resilient, lifelong learners. Any K-12 school in Tennessee is eligible to apply. Learn more about the application process [here](#).

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## Defined Careers and ElevateTN Webinar

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, Principals, Educators, CTE Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Last month, two new platforms were released to educators for grades 6-12 to expand and enhance career exploration and advising:

[Defined Careers](#) is a project-based solution that allows students in grades 6-12 to explore and experience careers. It includes a career assessment that guides students towards real-world projects across recommended career pathways. Defined Careers empowers educators to provide all students with equitable access to careers.

[Elevate TN](#) seeks to create a pipeline of skilled workers in Tennessee. The statewide web portal is available for any educator that serves grades 8-12 in any subject area including CTE programs of study. This platform provides students with job-shadowing and internship experiences, career exploration, and resume-building activities developed around local employer needs. Students can earn industry-recognized badges for their resumes while building skills that will support CTE industry credentials.

Learn more with our webinar on Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021 from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. CT on Zoom. You can access the webinar [here](#).

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## Applications Now Open: TVA STEM Classroom Grant Program

**Audience:** CTE Educators, Educators, Principals

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network and STEMx network, managed by Battelle, are pleased to announce the 2021-22 K-12 classroom STEM grant program sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority in partnership with Bicentennial Volunteers Incorporated (a TVA retiree organization). The grant program is designed to fund STEM learning projects in classrooms and schools in the TVA service area.

Last year's program awarded \$800,000 in grants to schools across the Tennessee Valley. The competitive grant program provides teachers the opportunity to apply for funding up to \$5,000 for STEM projects with preference given to grant applications that explore TVA's primary area of focus: environment, energy, economic and career development, and community problem solving.

The grant application is open now at [www.tsin.org/classroom-grants](http://www.tsin.org/classroom-grants) and will remain open until **Monday, Oct. 18, 2021**. Eligible applicants are K-12 teachers or school administrators in public or private schools that receive power from a TVA distributor.

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## 2021-22 Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Grants and the High School WBL Grant Intent to Apply

**Audience:** CTE Directors, Director of Schools, Principals, Educators, District Staff, CTE Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

### **2021-22 Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grants**

The 2021-22 Middle School STEM and CTE Career Exploration Start-Up & Expansion Grants are intended to drive innovation in implementing middle school science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and career and technical education (CTE) programs that will ultimately lead to increased opportunities for middle school students. In February 2019, Governor Bill Lee announced the Future Workforce Initiative aimed at increasing access to STEM and CTE in the classroom.

### **High School School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant**

High-quality WBL partnerships with local businesses are thriving across the state, resulting in more students gaining valuable on-the-job training in high-growth occupations. However, in some areas, students face barriers to these types of experiences, such as a lack of transportation, restrictions on students in the workplace, and/or master scheduling conflicts.

In order to increase the number of students participating in high-quality WBL placements, the department has allocated \$120,000 to support LEAs in the development of a self-sustaining school-based enterprise (SBE) for WBL students to operate. The 2021-22 High School WBL School-Based Enterprise Start-Up Grants are intended to drive innovation in implementing high-quality work-based learning experiences for students who face barriers to participate in off-campus placements.

### **Grant Requirements & Deadlines**

You can find requirements for the Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grants and the High School School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant, including descriptions of all the opportunities, in the 2021-22 Middle School STEM and CTE Career Exploration Start-Up & Expansion Grant Announcement available [here](#). This comprehensive guide also includes grant application questions that districts can use to draft responses prior to applying in ePlan.

Please note the important deadlines listed in the announcement. Prior to submitting a completed application in ePlan, all eligible applicants (LEAs) must submit a [Notice of Intent to Apply](#) by **11:59 p.m. CT on Thursday, Oct. 14**. Failure to submit a Notice of Intent to Apply by the stated deadline will disqualify any subsequent application.

Grant applications will be available in ePlan on **Monday, Oct. 18**. The application period will close on **Monday, Nov. 1 at 11:59 p.m. CT**.

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## **Announcing the Statewide Design Challenge**

**Audience:** *CTE Educators, Educators, Principals*

**Contact:** 

TSIN, in collaboration with the TN Chamber of Commerce, is excited to announce the 2022 Statewide Design Challenge: Infrastructure. Infrastructure is defined as the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society or enterprise, which includes roads, buildings, utilities/power supplies, and more!

This year's challenge invites students to consider how they can improve their school, community, or world by reimagining an existing physical space, system, product, or service so that it is more equitable, accessible, or efficient. Students have a choice about how they approach the topic to best consider the needs of their local communities.

Participating schools will conduct classroom-level presentations and then nominate outstanding projects to participate in a virtual competition in Spring 2022. For safety and equity, all competitions will be held virtually this year. The cost and time of travel can be a burden to some families and schools. To alleviate that burden and encourage more students to explore STEM challenges, we will hold all levels of competition virtually. No student should be excluded from this opportunity due to constraint of their location in the state.

Sign up [here](#) to receive a Welcome Packet email.

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## **STE(A)M School Designation Added to STEM Designation!**

**Audience:** *CTE Directors, CTE educators, Educators, Principals*

**Contact:** 

Previously, schools have been able to apply for a STEM Designation to recognize outstanding efforts in STEM education. Acknowledging the importance of the arts, STE(A)M Designations are also now available to all Tennessee K-12 schools.

STE(A)M is an approach to teaching and learning that integrates science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. STE(A)M involves the application of creative thinking and design skills to STEM projects and introduces a variety of new ways to use traditional STEM skills. Schools can choose to apply for a STEM or a STE(A)M Designation.

Schools that seek to apply for STE(A)M School Designation will emphasize the arts integration within their narrative responses and artifacts provided within the portfolio application. Schools interested in applying for a STEM or STE(A)M Designation can learn more about the application process at the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network [website](#).

The STEM Designation Rubric has also been updated to include STE(A)M and to help schools identify the differences between applying for the STEM versus STE(A)M Designation. Explore updates to the STEM and STE(A)M School Designation rubric [here](#).

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## TDOE & UT Martin Offer Free ACT Prep Workshops and Classes to All Tennessee High School Students and Teachers

**Audience:** Counselors, Director of Schools, CTE Educators, CTE Directors, Educators, Principals, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

In partnership with the University of Tennessee at Martin (UT Martin), the [department recently announced](#) that all Tennessee high school students and teachers will have access to workshops that help prepare students to succeed on the ACT, one of the most important college entrance exams offered to high school students across the country. These workshops began in Summer 2021 and are expected to continue through Fall 2022.

This fall we will offer five (5) [ACT Teacher Workshops](#). These free, two-hour workshops, conducted via Zoom, will provide strategies and practical skills to teachers to help them improve student ACT outcomes. Interested teachers can learn more about and register for the workshops [here](#).

The [ACT Success Tactics Workshops and Mastery Classes](#) and [Virtual Office Hours](#) are available to rising 11th and 12th graders in Tennessee. During these free virtual workshops, we will share resources and tools that will teach students effective test-taking strategies, as well as provide them content practice in specific subject areas. Interested students can learn more about and register for the workshops, classes, and office hours [here](#).

---

## THEC/TSAC Friday Webinar Series for Counselors

**Audience:** District Staff, Counselors, Principals, Educators, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

We are happy to announce a webinar series for counselors and college access professionals to coincide with College Application & Exploration Month. Please forward to any professional at your school who would benefit.

**Click below to register:**

- [FAST Review/State Aid Legislative Updates](#)



- Friday, Sept. 24: 10 a.m. CT
- [Happy FAFSA Season!](#)
- Friday, Oct. 1: 10 a.m. CT

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## Occupational License New Teacher Training (OLNTT) Facilitators Needed

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, District Staff, Educators, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Division of College, Career and Technical education is **currently seeking facilitators for the Occupational License New Teacher Training**. This training ensures that new CTE teachers are prepared to achieve immediate, measurable success with their students upon entering the classroom.

As experienced and successful teachers, facilitators will play an integral role in the success of the Occupational License New Teacher Training by leading sessions that support a CTE teacher's ability to plan instruction and manage their classroom. Our training approach focuses on a small number of skills which we believe teachers must acquire before entering the classroom.

Access the OLNTT Facilitator description [here](#).

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## T.C.A. 49-6-412: Career Assessment Guidance

**Audience:** Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, Director of Schools, Educators, Principals

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

TCA 49-6-412 requires each LEA to administer a career assessment in grades seven or eight "in order to help inform a student's high school plan of study" and that the Tennessee Department of Education shall "identify career assessments that LEAs may administer for purposes of this subsection."

The department conducted an analysis of currently available career assessments both on the market or offered for free online. A full list of approved career assessments and the criteria used for their analysis can be found on the [CCTE website](#).

For further questions or guidance, please reach out to [Liza Ambrose](#), Program Manager for Career Readiness.

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## Fall STE(A)M Resource Hub Themes and Descriptions for September

**Audience:** CTE Educators and Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN) have released the Fall STE(A)M Resource Hub themes and descriptions for September. The Fall STE(A)M Resource Hub engages students with challenges around design activities, critical thinking, and career exploration throughout the month of September.

- **Sept. 20 - 24: National Construction Week**

- National Construction Week occurs on the 3rd week of September every year! This is a relatively new celebratory week, established in 2016. This special week we'll explore the work of dedicated people who develop the infrastructure we depend upon. Experiment with how infrastructure is created and maintained. Imagine how important construction is to our everyday life. We depend on it for transportation, manufacturing, commerce, and more. And with so many opportunities for employment, maybe you'll find a career path in construction where you build your future and the future of infrastructure!

- **Sept. 27 – Oct. 1: Welcome Fall!**

- Welcome Fall! It's nearly time for sweaters, apple cider, pumpkin pie, and falling leaves. Autumn is nearly upon us and that means changing temperatures as well as shifts in the crops farmers grow, the movement of the sun, and changes in plant life. This week learn more about the science of seasonal changes, record and predict effects of seasonal changes, and consider what careers might be effected.

For more information click the following [link](#).

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## September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

**Audience:** *Principals, Teachers, Support Staff*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

As we enter suicide awareness month, the Division of Student and Family Supports wants to provide every school district with a [resource handout](#) for virtual or physical placement throughout Tennessee public schools. This is a visual reminder for youth and a quick way to increase access to professional crisis support.

In addition to the handout, here are two resources available to all youth and staff in need:

- [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:](#) [REDACTED]
  - This resource is available 24/7 and is free and confidential.
- [The TN Statewide Crisis Line:](#) [REDACTED]
  - All calls are routed to a trained crisis counselor in your area, who will provide you with support and guidance, and work to connect you with appropriate community supports.

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## Mark Your Calendars: EPSO Week is October 18-22!

**Audience:** *Counselors, CTE Directors, CTE Educators, Director of Schools, District Staff, Educators, Principals, School Staff, Secondary Supervisors*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Our annual EPSO (Early Postsecondary Opportunities) Week will take place **October 18-22** to expand and promote early postsecondary opportunities for your students. Complete

the [EPSO Week Registration Form found here](#) by **Thursday, Sept. 30**, and the Early Postsecondary Team will provide schools with a checklist with helpful reminders and tools to use throughout the week. Follow @tnedu on Twitter and use the hashtag #EPSOWeek2021 to win prizes and giveaways by sharing creative ways your school promotes EPSOs!

## Boot Camp for New Family Resource Center Directors

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Family Resource Center Directors

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Division of Student and Family Supports will offer a virtual Boot Camp for new Family Resource Center (FRC) Directors. Our FRC Boot Camp provides new FRC Directors with strategies, tools, and best practices to ensure success in their initial first three months. This boot camp is for new FRC directors beginning this school year or FRC Directors who may have begun in the previous school year. Registered participants will receive a link to join the Microsoft TEAMS event before the event date.

Mark your calendar for the following date and register below:

- Oct. 6: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. CT

New FRC Directors can register [here](#) to attend the boot camp.

## Educators

*Tennessee will set a new path for the education profession and be the top state to become and remain a teacher and leader.*

## Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) for Beginning Principals and Assistant Principals

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, Principals, Assistant Principals, Instructional Supervisors, TASL Configurators

**Contact:** [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

TASL Academy registration for the 2021-22 school year for beginning principals and assistant principals is now closed. All qualified participants have been contacted and we are sharing all necessary details directly with the cohorts. TASL Academy for Beginning Principals and Assistant Principals will be held virtually for the 2021-22 school year.

This virtual offering will ensure flexibility in scheduling and maximum participation for those who need to complete the academies. The scheduled session modules are listed below. The session release and end dates are the same for Beginning Principals and Assistant Principals. TASL Academy office hours and synchronous learning sessions will be held every month to answer questions, deepen the learning, and offer an opportunity for participants to have a thought partner in applying theory to leadership practices.

Additionally, leaders will engage in discourse and glean information regarding the module objectives. Further details will be forthcoming regarding session sign up, and times for office hours and synchronous sessions.

- TASL Overview and Info Session: September 29 & 30, 2021
- Session 1: October 11 – October 22, 2021

- Session 2: November 8 – November 19, 2021
- Session 3: December 6 – December 17, 2021
- Session 4: January 10 – January 21, 2022
- Session 5: February 7 – February 18, 2022
- Session 6: March 7 – March 18, 2022
- Session 7: April 4 – April 15, 2022

Modules open at 8:00 a.m. CST on the first day of the session window and close at 5:00 p.m. CST on the last day of the window. Work is completed asynchronously on the department's learning management system. Participants have flexibility within the window to complete the work on their own time knowing that everything must be submitted before 5:00 p.m. on the closing date of that session.

**Note:** TASL Academy for Supervisors will launch in January 2022 and runs during the spring semester only. This program is for those in TASL mandated instructional supervisory roles who hold an active TN administrator's license. More information will be forthcoming.

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## SPED and ESL Additional Endorsement Grant Opportunity—Self-Registration Window Open for Licensed Tennessee Educators

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, HR Directors, Special Education Directors, ESL/ELL Directors, Principals, Teachers*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The department is pleased to announce a new **Special Education** and **English as a Second Language Additional Endorsement Grant** partnership with **Trevecca Nazarene University** and **University of Tennessee-Knoxville**. This grant provides the opportunity for up to **2,400 educators** to add an endorsement in either **Special Education (SPED)** or **English as a Second Language (ESL)** over the course of the 2021-22 school year.

Coursework will begin in October 2021 and will be offered in an **online, asynchronous** format at no cost to participants. Grant funds will also cover the cost of one administration of a required licensure assessment. For the SPED additional endorsement opportunities being offered, either LEAs or participants will be responsible for covering the cost of 1 required PRAXIS exam prior to earning endorsement. Participants completing the SPED additional endorsement program will also have the opportunity to serve on a provisional Special Education endorsement if they so choose.

With **2,400** total seats available across all 4 programs, the Department hopes to enroll roughly **600** educators on an annual basis in each of the additional endorsement areas covered as part of the grant award, as listed below:

Endorsement Area	Endorsement Code
Special Education Interventionist K-8	144
Special Education Interventionist 6-12	145
Special Education Comprehensive K-12	461

### English as a Second Language\*

Endorsement Area	Endorsement Code
English as a Second Language Pre-K-12	490

**\*Note:** The English as a Second Language additional endorsement pathway being offered as part of this grant opportunity is currently **at capacity**. Interested participants should complete the waitlist registration form linked below. Participants will added be added from the **waitlist** as space allows based on the order in which they submit their name and information.

### Participant Self-Registration: Due by September 30, 2021

In order to register for participation in one of these additional endorsement opportunities, currently licensed Tennessee educators should complete one of the relevant forms below by **Thursday, September 30, 2021**.

#### Special Education Self-Registration Forms:

- [Special Education Interventionist 6-12 Additional Endorsement Participant Registration Form](#)
- [Special Education Comprehensive K-12 Additional Endorsement Participant Registration Form](#)

#### Special Education Interventionist K-8 Waitlist Registration Form:

- [Special Education Interventionist K-8 Additional Endorsement Waitlist Registration Form](#)

#### English as a Second Language Waitlist Registration Form:

- [English as a Second Language Participant Registration Form](#)

Seats in each endorsement pathway will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, until all seats are filled.

Please note: those individuals who have already been nominated by their LEAs for this opportunity, or for another additional endorsement opportunity being offered by TDOE, will not be eligible for self-registration at this time.

With questions, please contact [REDACTED].

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Principals, School Administrators, Educators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The **Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST)** are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science teaching.

Anyone—principals, teachers, parents, students, or members of the general public—may nominate exceptional STEM teachers who are currently teaching grades K-6 for the 2022 award year. Teachers may also apply directly here.

Presidential Awardees receive a certificate signed by the President of the United States; a trip to Washington, D.C., to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities; and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation. They also join a network of award-winning teachers from across the country. The National Science Foundation administers PAEMST on the behalf of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The **nomination deadline is January 7, 2022**, and the **application deadline is February 6, 2022** for elementary teachers (grades K-6). Secondary teachers (grades 7-12) will be eligible to apply during a future cycle.

With questions, please contact Tennessee PAEMST coordinator, Janelle Brown.

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## TDOE Offers Three Initiatives to Support Recruitment and Hiring

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, HR Directors, Educators, Principals, Teachers

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Since May 2020, Tennessee Department of Education has launched three initiatives to support districts and schools in filling critical vacancies, as the COVID-19 pandemic has limited many traditional recruitment methods. We are excited to continue these initiatives in 2021.

The TN Substitute Teacher Jobs Connection supports districts in their recruitment efforts by providing a central location for interested applicants to discover substitute teaching opportunities in the state's schools and districts. TDOE would also like to thank Governor Bill Lee's Office for launching a LinkedIn campaign to support this initiative. Over **1,075** substitute teachers have submitted their information so far!

The TN Education Job Board highlights openings for available district positions and provides contact information all in one location. The Board also includes a list of feature jobs that have been identified as critical vacancies. There are currently **over 175** posted and featured education jobs from districts across the state. District information will also continue to be updated on a regular basis as submissions are received.

The TN Teacher Jobs Connection serves as a central location for interested applicants to connect with teaching opportunities in the state's 147 districts. Any educator interested in a new teaching role in Tennessee is welcome to submit their information to the department through the form. Since May 2020, we have received over **3,450** submissions from teachers, administrators, and education professionals from across the country! You can read more about this initiative and its impact here.

Read more about these recruitment initiatives here.

# Supporting Work

## ★ 2021 LEA Compliance Report

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Districts are required to comply with all federal and state education laws and State Board of Education (SBE) rules. The commissioner of education is responsible for ensuring school laws and SBE rules are executed as well as taking corrective action when a district is noncompliant with those laws and rules or is not following a department-approved compliance plan.

The LEA Compliance Report is a document used by the department in its annual process of ensuring compliance. All districts are required to complete the [report](#), including the [corrective action plan template](#) if applicable, and upload it to ePlan (instructions [here](#)) by **November 30**.

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## ★ ARP Homeless 2.0 Application Opened Sept. 1

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Homeless Liaisons*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On April 23, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced the availability of \$800 million to support the identification, enrollment, participation, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness and to provide them with wrap-around services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) § 2001(b)(1) authorizes the ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP Homeless) Fund. ARP Homeless funding is being allocated to states through two separate awards: ARP Homeless 1.0 and ARP Homeless 2.0.

ED also established that an LEA must have an allocation of at least \$5,000 under the formula to be eligible for an ARP Homeless 2.0 sub grant on its own. If an LEA's allocation is less than \$5,000, to receive an ARP Homeless 2.0 sub grant, the LEA must join a consortium of LEAs in which the sum of its members' allocations meets the \$5,000 threshold. A consortium is made up of two or more LEAs that collaborate to meet the needs of homeless students within each LEA or the consortium as a whole. LEAs that generate more than \$5,000 are considered stand-alone LEAs but may serve as a fiscal agent to LEAs who do not meet their \$5,000 threshold requirement. A fiscal agent is an LEA within an ARP Homeless 2.0 consortium responsible for managing all the member LEA's ARP 2.0 funds and distributing funds to each member LEA accordingly. More information about consortium options will be shared with impacted LEAs soon.

LEAs were notified of their ARP Homeless 2.0 allocation awards on Aug. 9, 2021, via email. A live webinar on ARP Homeless 2.0 funding was held on Monday, Aug. 23, 2021. This webinar covered the allowable use of funds, fiscal considerations, and detailed instructions on how to complete the application in ePlan. The slide deck from the ARP Homeless 2.0 webinar can be found [here](#). The slide deck can also be found in [ePlan > TDOE Resources > ARP Homeless > ARP Homeless 2.0](#). The ARP Homeless 2.0 Technical Application Guide can be found [here](#). The Technical Guide contains important information such as steps for completing the ARP Homeless 2.0 application, consortia and fiscal agent information, budgets and budget tags, and allowable use of funds.

The ARP Homeless 2.0 application opened in ePlan on **Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021**, and is due **Oct. 1, 2021**. **All LEAs, including those who plan to release funds, must complete the application as outlined in the [ARP Homeless 2.0 Technical Application Guide](#).**

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## ★ Updated Lead in Drinking Water Reporting

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools & Designated District Personnel*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-2-133](#), local boards of education are required to develop a policy to implement a program to reduce the potential sources of lead contamination in drinking water in public schools. The policy must require periodic testing of lead levels in drinking water sources at school facilities and specific actions depending upon the results of the tests. If the result of a lead level test is equal to or exceeds twenty parts per billion (20 ppb), LEAs shall submit an online form through [Formstack](#). Today, September 23, the online form was updated and LEAs will no longer upload testing results. The form now contains fields that will collect information on testing, including total number of fixtures tested, and elevated results.

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## ★ Opportunity for Free Water Lead Testing

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Tennessee Department of Health is offering water lead testing to schools, Head Start/Early Head Start facilities and Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) licensed childcare centers at no cost. Participating facilities will be provided a lead testing kit with bottles, instructions, and pre-paid return shipping labels. Testing results will be shared with the facility as soon as possible, but no later than two weeks following the completion of testing. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation will provide technical assistance to facilities for responding to test results and addressing elevated lead levels when necessary.

Additional information about this funding opportunity can be accessed [here](#). To request a lead testing kit, contact the Tennessee Department of Health Laboratory Services staff by phone at (615) 262-6300 or by email at [REDACTED].

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## 🔄 LEA Approval of InformTN School Plans: Due October 1

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Supervisors*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The final step in the annual school planning process is the review and approval of school plans by the LEA. District leaders may use the school planning [rubric](#), previously shared in School Planning Resources for District Leaders, to support their review. School plans must be reviewed and approved by **October 1**. The 2021-22 planning dates can be found [here](#).

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# FY21 ESEA Waiver Requests

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, Federal Program Directors

**Contact:** [ESEA Divisional Coordinators](#)

Due to the continued extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-21 school year, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) is offering a waiver for an State educational agency (SEA) to be able to approve a local educational agency (LEA) to carry over more than **15 percent of its federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 Title I, Part A funds** (i.e., the **2020-21 Title I, Part A funds that will become carryover funds on October 1, 2021**), even if the LEA has received a waiver from its SEA to exceed this limitation for its FFY 2018 or FFY 2019 Title I, Part A funds.

Second, ED is offering flexibility to each SEA to be able to extend for itself and its subgrantees the period of availability of FFY 2019 (**funds awarded to LEAs July 1, 2019, for the 2019-20 school year**) funds for programs included in the State's consolidated State plan to allow additional time to obligate those funds. This extension applies to:

- Title I, Part A of the ESEA (Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs), including the portions of the SEA's Title I, Part A award used to carry out section 1003 school improvement
- Title I, Part D, Subpart 1 of the ESEA (SEA funds for Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk) - DOC/DCS only
- Title I, Part D, Subpart 2 of the ESEA (LEA funds for Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk)
- Title II, Part A of the ESEA (Supporting Effective Instruction)
- Title III, Part A of the ESEA (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement)
- Title IV, Part A of the ESEA (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants)
- Title IV, Part B of the ESEA (21st Century Community Learning Centers)
- Title V, Part B, Subpart 2 of the ESEA (Rural and Low-Income School Program)
- Lottery for Education Afterschool Program (LEAP)
- McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

Additionally, waivers are available for the 25 percent Title III, Part A and Title IX, Part A McKinney-Vento state carryover limit (Carryover limitation for **FFY20 [funds awarded to LEAs July 1, 2020, for the 2020-21 school year]** Title III, Part A and Title IX, Part A funds that will become carryover funds on Oct. 1, 2021). LEAs and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) may also apply for a waiver to remove limits on the amount of Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers) or LEAP funds that can be carried over into the 2021-22 school year.

**LEAs are encouraged to take advantage of this flexibility and to ensure all Title I funds are meaningfully obligated and expended.** To apply for a waiver LEAs must complete a Federal Program Waiver Request in ePlan by **Sept. 30, 2021**. Detailed instructions on how to complete a request can be found [here](#). More information about available waivers can be found [here](#).

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## New On-Demand PD and Resources in Active Students, Active Learners

**Audience:** District and School Level Administration

**Contact:** 

Some recent updates to the [Active Students, Active Learners website](#) include:

- 24 live webinar recordings from the “Active Students, Active Learners: Virtual PD Week” are now available as [on-demand learning modules](#) for PD credit through April 30. These webinars were designed to connect all teachers, lead educators, principals, administrators, and support staff with resources and instructional strategies for creating and supporting a physically active school culture and learning environment. Certificates for professional learning hours are automatically generated at the successful completion of each module.
  - [Research and data](#) supporting physical activity in all areas of a school culture, including during instructional hours.
  - See where Tennessee’s Social and Personal Competencies naturally fit within K-12 physical education instruction using [this crosswalk](#), as well as other [state specific resources for PE/PA](#).
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## FY22 Safe Schools Application

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, SAVE Act Coordinators*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Before adjourning, the General Assembly appropriated \$20 million in recurring funds for FY 22 school safety grants. As in prior years, the final funding and match amounts for Safe Schools will not be available until the BEP is finalized; however, districts may use their FY 21 grant amounts as an estimate. A timeline of the application process is below:

- July 19, 2021 Safe Schools application released in ePlan
- August 1, 2021 Final Expense Report for FY21 Safe Schools application due in ePlan
- September 30, 2021 Deadline for receipt of Safe Schools application

Additional information regarding the application can be found [here](#).

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## Re-Opening of Virtual School Application

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

To provide additional flexibilities for virtual learning at this time, the department is re-opening the virtual school application for districts interested in opening a new virtual school or expanding an existing virtual school. Districts should complete the [Updated Program and School Authorization Form](#). Specific instructions for completing the form are provided [here](#). Districts seeking to expand an existing virtual school may add up to three (3) grades to the grade span currently served.

Forms should be submitted to [REDACTED] with a copy to [REDACTED]. The department will be accepting applications on a rolling basis. Upon receipt of all required materials and any clarifications, the virtual school or expansion will be authorized and may be implemented immediately. For more information, contact [Matt Bowser](#).

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## TDOE & T-Mobile Continue T-Mobile Tech for TN Students

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Last year, the Tennessee Department of Education [announced](#) a new five-year partnership, T-Mobile Tech for TN Students, allowing school districts across the state to have access to over 200,000 student connectivity devices that can be provided directly to families at no cost to them.

Year two of the program has started for the 2021-22 school year and applications are now open for districts that would like to receive additional devices or districts that would like to participate for the first time. A district informational webinar session will be available to answer any questions. **The webinar will take place today, September 23rd at 1:00 p.m.** To register, click [here](#).

Information and district applications are available on the department's [T-Mobile Tech for TN Students webpage](#).

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## Assessment and Accountability

### Spring 2021 TCAP Family Portal Data Now Available

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Educators*

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Each year, TCAP tests are designed to assess what our students know and what we can do to help them succeed in the future. They provide feedback about students' academic progress and how it aligns with grade-level expectations. Now families can find detailed, personalized, information about their child's progress on the TCAP Family Portal.

Here are some ways to use the TCAP Family Portal:

- Identify student strengths and next steps for areas to improve in the future.
- Use information presented in the portal to engage in conversations with educators about your student's academic progress.
- Track progress over time with a "Test History" feature.
- Find helpful links to department TCAP resources.

Families can register [here](#) with their student's USID number. Data from the spring 2021 testing went live in the portal on Friday, July 30 for TCAP and became available on August 20 for TCAP-Alternate. Use the seven-digit number found on your student's ISR and add two zeroes in front of that number. The resulting nine-digit number will enable you to create an account for your student. For example, a state ID 1234567 would become [REDACTED].

A toolkit to support districts in communicating about this resource is available [here](#), including the Family Portal FAQ available [here](#). Videos to help users in navigating the portal are available on [Best for All Central](#).

Districts may access the TCAP Family Portal Help Guide and the TCAP Educator Portal Help Guide on [LiveBinders](#).

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# National Assessment Governing Board Nominations

**Audience:** Directors of Schools, District Testing Coordinators, Special Population Coordinators

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which develops policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), is seeking candidates for several positions (to be appointed in fall 2022), including fourth-grade teacher, eighth-grade teacher, secondary school principal, and general public representative-parent leader.

Candidates can nominate themselves or be nominated by someone else. **Board nominations must be submitted online by Nov. 1, 2021.**

You can learn more about the open positions, Board members' responsibilities, and the submission requirements [here](#). This is a great opportunity to have the voice of Tennessee and your community represented on our national stage. All interested educators are encouraged to apply.

## In Case You Missed It

### District Information Dashboard & Attendance Coding

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

The Department has relaunched the District Information Dashboard for the 2021-2022 School Year. In addition to providing reporting on COVID counts in schools/districts, the dashboard will provide federal reporting requirements required under ESSER. You can find the dashboard at: <https://districtinformation.tnedu.gov>.

#### New on the dashboard this year:

- If your district offers remote instruction during quarantine, you will be able to flag that information on the district information page.
- ESSER Allocations: The dashboard will provide a sum of ESSER 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 plans submitted by the district and approved by the state. This data will come straight from ePlan and will not require any input from the district.
- Enrollment and Attendance information: After the 15th of each month, the dashboard will provide a view of enrollment and attendance data submitted by the district through your student information systems into EIS.
- Waiver information: On a school level, if you are granted a waiver, this information will be inputted by the department and reflected on the school listing within the district.
- Links to ESSER document and response plans: The dashboard will provide links to your ESSER plan documents as well as your publicly posted, locally adopted COVID mitigation strategies and your ESSER-required health and safety plan. We ask that you submit the links to those documents for the department to link to your district profile by filling out the survey [here](#).

Like last year, COVID counts should be entered by the district representative no later than 5 p.m. CT on Mondays for confirmed COVID cases in the schools during the previous week. **ANY DATA ENTERED AFTER 5 p.m. CT WILL NOT REFLECT ON THE DASHBOARD for the previous week.**

For attendance coding, which will be reflected on the dashboard, the EIS attendance code D, Distance Learning, was introduced last year to assist districts across the state as students transitioned to a distance learning model. In order to support State Rule 0520-01-13-.01(1)(d), the D attendance code will be updated as follows for the 2021-22 school

year: D, Distance Learning/Virtual Classrooms Due to Quarantine.

The D attendance code will continue to be used for positive attendance reporting to track students that are participating in district sponsored remote learning based on local school board policy.

In order to ensure students are counted present accurately during any remote instruction period, there are 3 scenarios under which the “D” code shall be used for positive attendance reporting:

- Individual student that are quarantining due to COVID
- Classrooms that are utilizing remote learning with an approved Commissioner waiver.
- Schools that are utilizing remote learning with an approved Commissioner waiver.

Districts that are not offering remote instruction for students who are quarantined due to COVID should be counted as absent (A).

**If you or your designated representative do not have access to the dashboard, please contact the District Technology Help Desk at [REDACTED] and complete the access request form.**

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## TDOE Announces School Designations for 2020–21 School Year

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Tuesday, Sept. 14, the Tennessee Department of Education announced the school designations for the 2020-21 school year, which include 188 Reward schools spanning 61 districts statewide.

In addition to recognizing Reward schools, the department also named schools that have improved and earned their way off of the Priority list. Priority schools, federally known as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, were identified for poor academic performance at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year. Focus schools, which are either Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI), could also exit if they met the respective exit criteria.

The complete list of Reward schools and schools exiting Priority or Focus status is posted on the [department's website](#).

Learn more [here](#).

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## TDOE Remote Learning Waiver Letter and Application

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

For cases where districts can demonstrate and document COVID-related needs in their school communities that necessitate a temporary shift to remote instruction for classrooms

or entire schools, Commissioner Schwinn will entertain waiver requests for districts to provide temporary remote instruction due to COVID-19 at the classroom and school level.

This waiver process is not required for individual students on quarantine to receive remote instruction, and waivers, if approved, will be valid for up to seven calendar days. The department will review waiver requests three times a day at 9am, 12 noon, and 3pm CT and respond in writing to the district as quickly as possible.

The commissioner of education is authorized by state law and state board of education (SBE) rule to grant waivers of certain statutes and SBE rules to local education agencies (LEAs) upon request. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-203 and SBE Rule 0520-01-02-.12(6), the department will post any approved waivers within five (5) business days of the commissioner's approval to our website. The waivers shall include the name of the LEA requesting the waiver and an explanation of the waiver requested.

All waiver requests and responses related to the COVID-19 Remote Learning Waiver will be posted daily at 5:30 p.m. CT. Waivers that come in after 5:30 p.m. will be posted the following day. They will be accessible through [this link](#) at the very bottom of the webpage.

The letter Commissioner Schwinn shared with directors about the application and process can be found [here](#) and the LEA COVID-19 Relief waiver request application can be found [here](#).

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## September 2021 is Tennessee Literacy Month!

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Educators, Students, Community Members

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Today, the Tennessee Department of Education [announced](#) the state is celebrating Tennessee Literacy Month throughout the month of September, highlighting the state's focus on early literacy through strategic investments and optional, free resources to help students boost literacy rates and help teachers improve reading comprehension for early learners.

[Governor Bill Lee proclaimed](#) September as Tennessee Literacy Month, and throughout the month, the department is highlighting how reading is for all students. We will be sharing exciting new announcements and highlighting the already incredible work happening around [Reading 360](#), the state's comprehensive literacy initiative.

The department is also excited to introduce [Riley the Reading Raccoon](#), a cartoon mascot for reading to help emphasize the importance of early literacy for our youngest students. Using the hashtag #TNReadingForALL, Tennessee families can follow Riley on social media throughout the month to learn Riley's favorite book and favorite place to read, and why Riley loves reading.



Special shout out to Overton County Schools for celebrating with us this month. Educators and students have shared their love of learning through various activities with a fun theme- camping.

Please share a short video of why you love reading and how important early literacy is. You can also send a photo of your favorite book or favorite place to read and we will highlight your submission on social media. Please include your name and county where you live and email your submission to [REDACTED]. We hope you'll join us this month and share your love for reading by using [these graphics](#) on your social channels!

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## 2022 Tennessee Superintendent of the Year Announced: Dr. Ted Horrell, Lakeland School System

**Audience:** Director of Schools

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

On Sunday, September 12, Dr. Ted Horrell, Director of Lakeland School System, was named the 2022 Tennessee Superintendent of the Year at the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS) annual awards banquet during the annual Superintendent Study Council Conference in Gatlinburg.

Dr. Horrell was selected for this honor from a distinguished group of eight Regional Superintendents of the Year, which included:

- Dr. Jimmy Carter, Union County Schools, East region
- Dr. Jeff Moorhouse, Kingsport City Schools, First region
- Millard House, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, Mid-Cumberland region
- Dr. Leah Watkins, Henry County Schools, Northwest region
- Dr. Joey Vaughn, Manchester City Schools, South Central region
- Dr. Linda Cash, Bradley County Schools, Southeast region
- Corby King, Putnam County Schools, Upper Cumberland region

Learn more [here](#).

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## 1000+ Tennessee High Schoolers from 100+ School Districts Begin Free Online AP Courses Through AP Access for ALL

**Audience:** Director of Schools, Educators, Students, Community Members

**Contact:** [REDACTED]

Earlier this month, the Tennessee Department of Education, in partnership with the Niswonger Foundation, announced the launch of the state's new AP Access for ALL program,

which is providing online advanced placement courses this school year for nearly 1,200 high school students representing 102 school districts across Tennessee.

AP Access for ALL is a grant program created by the Tennessee Department of Education and administered by its partner the Niswonger Foundation to provide students across the state with access to virtual AP courses, eliminating financial barriers and supporting student enrollment in AP coursework not currently offered at their home high school.

Since June, AP Access for ALL has successfully onboarded over 75% of school districts that include high schools to participate in the program. Of the 102 participating districts, 21 districts are in counties classified as at-risk or distressed and 38 are rural districts. Students in these participating districts, many of whom previously had no access or only limited access to advanced placement courses, can now choose from [14 different advanced placement courses](#) and earn free college credit while in high school.

For a full list of participating counties, courses offered, and more information, visit [tnapaccessforall.org](http://tnapaccessforall.org). Learn more [here](#).

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## Free ACT Retake Opportunities Available for All Tennessee High School Seniors to Help Boost Scores

**Audience:** *Director of Schools*

**Contact:** 

Earlier this month, the Tennessee Department of Education [highlighted](#) an opportunity this fall for all high school seniors to boost their scores on the ACT college entrance exam after taking the test the first time as a junior during the COVID-19 pandemic. While a [recent ACT, Inc. study](#) found that the 2020-21 ACT results indicated an anticipated decline in ACT scores nationwide, Tennessee is the first and only state to offer this free retake opportunity to every Tennessee high school senior this fall.

This year, the department is urging all Tennessee high school seniors to take advantage of the fall ACT retake opportunity and has expanded the state testing windows to provide additional options. ACT Inc.'s research shows that students who take the ACT more than once increase their score by an average of 1 point. Students who improve their scores in one or more subject areas tested will have their super-score composite available to send to postsecondary institutions and scholarship programs.

Districts across the state will be able to offer the free fall ACT retake opportunities during one of the following three-day windows:

- October 5-7, 2021
- October 19-21, 2021
- November 2-4, 2021

For more information, click [here](#).

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## PBS Programming Continues During September Statewide

**Audience:** *Directors of Schools, Educators, Families*

**Contact:** 

During the month of September, the department continues to provide academic instructional videos airing on PBS statewide, which provide video lessons for Pre-K-2 students. Additionally, there are math video lessons for specific grades.



Families can watch these instructional video lessons created specifically for Tennessee students on all six state PBS stations – WNPT Nashville, East Tennessee PBS, WCTE Upper Cumberland, WKNO Memphis, West TN PBS, and Chattanooga WTCL from 9 a.m. –11 a.m. CST.

The schedule for September can be found on the [department's website](#). PBS Teaching Tennessee classroom lessons for 1st-8th grade students can be found on the [department's YouTube page](#). All 320 lessons have companion teacher lesson plans and student packets. Learn more [here](#).

## Dates to Remember:

*\* Dates are subject to change as things continue to update. Please check the department's [online calendar](#) for updated dates.*

- **September 23:** South Central and Southeast School Counselor Regional Roundtable
- **September 23:** T-Mobile Tech for TN Students Webinar
- **September 23:** 2020-21 State Report Card Release
- **September 23:** Defined Careers and ElevateTN Webinar
- **September 24:** FAST Review/State Aid Legislative Updates Webinar
- **September 29 & 30:** TASL Overview and Info Session
- **September 30:** Participant Self-Registration for New SPED & ESL Endorsements Deadline
- **September 30:** Volunteer Tennessee's Award of Excellence Applications Deadline
- **September 30:** EPSO Week Registration Form Deadline
- **September 30:** Federal Program Waiver Request Deadline
- **September 30:** STEM/STE(A)M School Designation Intent to Apply Deadline
- **September 30:** Deadline for Receipt of Safe Schools Application
- **October 1:** ARP Homeless 2.0 Application Deadline
- **October 1:** Happy FAFSA Season Webinar
- **October 1:** LEA Approval of InformTN School Plans Deadline
- **October 6:** Family Resource Center Directors Boot Camp Registration
- **October 11-22:** TASL Academy Session 1
- **October 14:** HS School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant Intent to Apply
- **October 14:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Intent to Apply
- **October 15:** United State Senate Youth Program Application Deadline
- **October 18:** TVA STEM Classroom Grant Program Application Deadline
- **October 18:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Applications Available
- **October 18:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Applications Available
- **October 18-22:** Annual EPSO Week
- **November 1:** Deadline to submit NAGB Board Nominations
- **November 1:** Middle School STEM & CTE Career Exploration Start-up & Expansion Grant Application Deadline
- **November 1:** HS School-Based Enterprise (SBE) Start-up Grant Application Deadline
- **November 6:** Presidential Scholars Application Deadline
- **November 8-19:** TASL Academy Session 2
- **November 30:** 2021-22 Growth and Achievement Measure Selections and Scales Deadline

- **November 30:** LEA Compliance Report Due Date
- **January 7:** 2022 PAEMST Awards Nomination Deadline
- **January 10-14:** 2022 Winter Occupational License New Teacher Training
- **February 6:** 2022 PAEMST Awards Application Deadline

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