



Educators Guide

What does Race to the Top mean for Tennessee teachers?

Tennessee's First to the Top plan has given the state unique resources and financial opportunities – placing renewed focus on the classroom teacher. We're increasing our efforts to find and support the best possible talent for our schools, devoting millions to professional development. You – the teacher – are our most valuable resource and we're making a large investment in helping you better prepare your students.

Through First to the Top, Tennessee will:

- Provide you with training on the most effective use of your students' data and daily formative assessment practices
- Support you by providing relevant professional development through the Electronic Learning Center and provide new online content to increase curriculum options, particularly in science-related fields
- Conduct a Teacher Working Conditions survey that will allow us to understand your strategies and challenges in improving student achievement
- Provide you with desktop access to data on all students you teach through a Data Dashboard and Early Warning System
- Create additional competitive funding for district-level differentiated compensation plans
- Revamp the Teacher Preparation Program Effectiveness Report Card
- Create curriculum maps with pacing guides for all core subject areas in all grades
- Provide access to best practices among the most highly effective teachers and leaders in Tennessee
- Provide content area training for educators in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) disciplines
- Conduct college- and career-ready standards awareness training, supporting you as we prepare to implement Common Core standards

What will change?

1. We are changing the way we evaluate educators.

Under the Tennessee First to the Top Act, several changes were made to state law regarding teacher evaluation that will impact classrooms beginning in the 2011-12 school year. These include:

- Annual evaluation of teachers and principals
- A new teacher and principal evaluation framework that requires 50 percent of evaluation be based on student achievement measures – including 35 percent of TVAAS where available
- Creating a 15-member Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee to recommend guidelines and criteria for the new evaluation



2. We will vastly improve the level of support offered for effective use of TVAAS data in the classroom.

Tennessee already has the nation's richest data system. We will use First to the Top funds to expand this data system even further to provide you, the teacher, with a 360° view of each child. A new data dashboard will facilitate the use of TVAAS data in schools and classrooms while an Early Warning System incorporates academic success indicators and data from other child welfare agencies like the Department of Children's Services. We understand that numerous factors influence a child's ability to learn, and having a complete and current picture of these influences will provide teachers with early indicators regarding factors that may impede learning.

3. We will be a national leader in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education.

Under First to the Top, STEM-related professional development will be integrated into pre-service and in-service training. Additionally, Governor Phil Bredesen established the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network, charged with promoting and expanding the teaching and learning of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education in K-12 public schools across Tennessee. This network will facilitate the creation and expansion of STEM platform schools and STEM regional hubs, maximizing the effectiveness of valuable public private partnerships.

4. We will “re-tool” our accountability system to turn around our lowest-performing schools.

Through the state's education reform legislation, new structures have been put into place to sustain the bold and innovative reforms necessary to support our schools that are most in need. We're proposing to turn around the lowest achieving schools in the state through the Achievement School District. Funding and supports will also be provided for schools in danger of becoming low-achieving schools.

How can I stay informed about Tennessee First to the Top?

The success of Tennessee First to the Top will depend on the involvement of educators, parents and other education stakeholders across the state and nation.

In August, we'll launch a dedicated First to the Top website where you can sign up to receive periodic news and updates. Watch for this new source of information at www.tn.gov/firsttothetop in the days ahead. We are also establishing a teacher email listserv to distribute timely information to all educators about our First to the Top efforts.