



BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NINTH FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

LIZZETTE REYNOLDS
COMMISSIONER

Via Electronic Mail

September 29, 2026

Dr. John Ash, Director of Schools
Smith County School District
126 S C M S Lane
Carthage, TN 37030

Dear Director Ash:

I am in receipt of your waiver request for Summer Learning Camp Funds Carryover for High-Dosage, Low-Ratio Tutoring pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-1503(c)(2). The request seeks approval to use remaining 2026 Summer Programming funds to provide high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring services in literacy and/or mathematics to additional students identified as at risk of performing below grade level, after ensuring all students required to be served under T.C.A. § 49-6-3115 have been served.

After review of the information submitted, and with the understanding that Smith County School District will continue to prioritize all students required to receive tutoring services under T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, your request for a waiver of the limitation contained in T.C.A. § 49-6-1503(c)(2) is hereby granted for the 2026-27 school year.

If applicable and specifically requested in the waiver application, approval also extends to the waiver of the required number of weeks (12) for the fall semester as outlined in the assurances for the 2026 Summer Programming Extension Grant Application.

Please do not hesitate to contact the department if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lizzette Reynolds CB

Lizzette Reynolds
Commissioner

Summer Learning Camp Funds Carryover for High-Dosage, Low-Ratio Tutoring Waiver Request Application

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-1503(c)(2), funding for after-school learning mini-camps, learning loss bridge camps, and summer learning camps must first be used for the purposes outlined in T.C.A. § 49-6-1503(c)(1). Any remaining funds may be used by LEAs or public charter schools to provide tutoring required by T.C.A. § 49-6-3115. T.C.A. § 49-6-3115 requires tutoring services for students that were retained in grades K-3 and students required to be tutored as part of a promotion pathway in grades 4-5.

This specialized waiver application is to be used by local education agencies (LEAs) to request a waiver of the provision in T.C.A. § 49-6-1503(c)(2) limiting the use of the remaining funds from 2026 Summer Programming to students that were retained in grades K-3 and students required to be tutored as part of a promotion pathway in grades 4-5.

This specialized waiver request is designed to allow the remaining funds from 2026 Summer Programming to be spent on tutoring services for students to provide high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring services in literacy and/or math to additional students at-risk of performing below grade level upon the condition that the LEA has ensured that any students required to be served by T.C.A. § 49-6-3115 have been served first.

In addition, the LEA may request to waive the required number of weeks (12) for the fall semester as outlined in the assurances for the 2026 Summer Programming Extension Grant Application.

To apply for a waiver, email the completed form to Education.Waivers@tn.gov. Following review by the commissioner, the requestor will be notified in writing if the waiver request is approved or denied. Unless otherwise stated, all waivers granted by the commissioner shall be granted for one-year terms.

District Name

Smith County School District

School Name, if applicable

School Address, if applicable



Department of
Education

Director of Schools/Head of School Email Address

john.ash@smithcoedu.net

Director of Schools/Head of School Printed Name

Dr. John Ash

Director of Schools/Head of School Signature & Date

1. ☒ The LEA is requesting a waiver of the provision in T.C.A. § 49-6-1503(c)(2) limiting the use of the remaining funds from 2026 Summer Programming to students that were retained in grades K-3 and students required to be tutored as part of a promotion pathway in grades 4-5.

2. ☐ The LEA is requesting a waiver of the required number of weeks (12) for the fall semester as outlined in the assurances for the 2026 Summer Programming Extension Grant Application.

3. Explanation of how the statutory requirement limits the LEA's ability to meet student needs:
Provide an explanation of why the waiver is needed and how approval of the waiver would support improving academic outcomes for eligible students. Please include a description of how the LEA will prioritize students for high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring including data sources, grade levels, and content areas.

Smith County will utilize the granted waiver for the remaining funds from 2026 Summer Programming to tutor students not only in grades K-5 who require tutoring due to being retained or as part of a promotion pathway, but also other students who would benefit from the accelerated tutoring model by utilizing staff dedicated to high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring for those students. With dedicated tutoring personnel, the district can address our unique dynamics. The waiver allows for some of the limitations created by distinct scheduling and resource-allocation demands. Dedicated tutoring staff funded through Summer Programming funds establish a reliable framework tailored to the foundational needs of our students who require the most support.

The district prioritizes K-2 for this funding allocation, recognizing the critical role foundational literacy plays in long-term academic success. Mastery of core skills-such as phonemic awareness, decoding, number sense, and basic mathematical operations-is the single strongest predictor of future academic achievement. By intervening early, the district ensures students build a strong foundation before transitioning into complex content areas in upper grades.

Dedicated tutoring personnel is essential for scheduling flexibility to deliver high-dosage, low-ratio support. Rather than relying on floating or part-time staff, full-time tutors can integrate directly into the daily school schedule, delivering small-group interventions during dedicated learning sessions without disrupting core classroom instruction. This allows us to maintain lower student-to-tutor ratios, allowing educators to identify specific learning gaps, adapt instruction to individual learning speeds, and provide immediate feedback.

The district's placement of dedicated tutoring personnel directly addresses the challenges of serving a wide range of grades and schools while managing complex academic needs, from early letter-sound recognition to middle-school textual analysis. With dedicated funding through the Summer Programming grant, the district can expand tutoring access across all K-8 grades (specifically K-6), prioritizing English Language Arts (ELA). Elevating reading, writing, and overall literacy outcomes across all grade bands is the district's highest priority. By concentrating on ELA, the district can build a strong support base for students who need it most: securing early phonics and decoding skills in primary grades while reinforcing academic vocabulary, critical comprehension, and analytical writing in upper grades.

We will progress-monitor monthly with AIMSweb and MasteryConnect using the Oral Reading Fluency and other Fluency subtests, along with progress-monitoring probes to assess student performance and refine student groups and/or times based on trends in the 3-day-a-week or 2-day-a-week group. We will also informally monitor formative assessments based on AIMS Web recommendations for either silent reading fluency or oral reading fluency, supplemented by ongoing informal assessments in the key areas: Vocabulary and Comprehension. We will also use the Wit & Wisdom curriculum (4-5) and SAVVAS (6 or higher) to create MasteryConnect assessments and collect monthly data to adjust tutoring groups and content, with all data points collected in a district-wide data tracker. The district and school administration will also participate in monthly data talks to make team decisions on instructional adjustments and tutoring groups using data collected from learning walks and student assessment data.