



**TENNESSEE**  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**TENNESSEE'S EDUCATOR  
PREPARATION REPORT CARD:  
PROGRESS OVER TIME  
SEPTEMBER 2019**

## Introduction

Educator preparation plays a critical role in improving educational outcomes for students. In Tennessee, 38 state-approved educator preparation providers (EPPs) work to ensure teachers enter the profession with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to lead their classrooms. The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged in law with approving all Tennessee EPPs and with producing an annual report card on those providers to share information with the public. The [Educator Preparation Report Card](#) provides insight into the progress, achievements, and areas for growth of Tennessee's EPPs.

This report highlights several EPPs that made significant strides on the annual Report Card in the past several years. After first using Report Card data to identify EPPs with substantial improvements in a variety of areas, SBE staff conducted interviews with those EPPs to learn specific steps each provider took to improve. **The goal of this report is to share several emerging practices that appear to be driving positive change in EPPs across Tennessee in an effort to support continuous improvement for educator preparation statewide.**

## Key Findings

Educator preparation providers engaged in a variety of approaches that resulted in improvements on the Report Card. Five common themes that emerged through the interviews with top improvers were:

1. Combining targeted admissions and recruitment efforts with ongoing cohort monitoring to ensure a pool of strong, diverse teacher candidates.
2. Aligning program design and faculty training with the state teacher evaluation rubric (TEAM) to prepare candidates for expectations in the classroom.
3. Altering field experience and/or clinical placement programming to provide candidates with more experience in the field while still enrolled in the EPP.
4. Developing stronger partnerships with school districts both regarding specific candidates and district needs overall.
5. Integrating data analysis into programmatic decision-making.

## Structure of the Report

First, this report will review the background context of the Educator Preparation Report Card and the methodology used to identify top improvers. Then, for each of the five key findings, the report will explain the finding in more depth and provide direct examples from EPPs of how they implemented key changes in that area. Finally, the report will conclude with recommendations and next steps for educator preparation in Tennessee.

## Background on the Report Card

Since 2007, Tennessee state law<sup>1</sup> has required the production of a report card on “the effectiveness of teacher training programs.” The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) first produced the Report Card and the State Board of Education assumed that responsibility in 2015. In 2016, the SBE

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This report was researched and drafted by Don Cheatum, State Board of Education Policy Fellow. State Board staff provided additional research design, writing, editing, and formatting support.

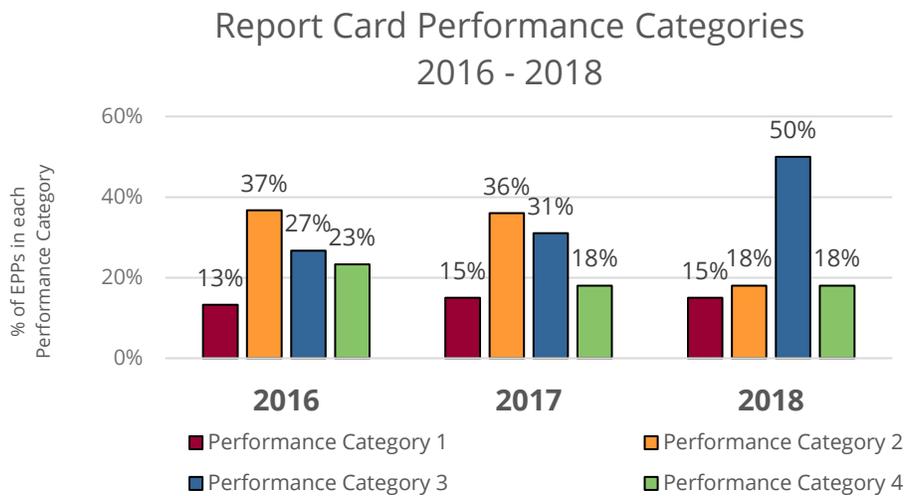
<sup>1</sup> T.C.A. § 49-5-108

gathered input from EPPs, districts, legislators, and other stakeholders in redesigning the Report Card as a user-friendly online tool.

The Report Card takes a multiple measures approach to evaluating EPPs' progress on key state priorities. The current scoring framework includes:

- Indicators of candidates' diversity and academic background,
  - Whether candidates earn endorsements in high-demand fields,
  - Completer placement and retention in Tennessee public schools, and
  - Completer observation and student growth (TVAAS) scores.
- In addition, there are a number of unscored informational metrics and more detailed breakdowns of data.

The scores for each metric are aggregated in an overall score ranging from one (lowest) to four (highest). As indicated in the chart below, more EPPs are scoring in the top two categories in recent years.



In the three years that the State Board of Education has produced the report card, EPPs have made programmatic changes that resulted in improved scores on the Report Card and, more importantly, better outcomes for the K-12 students newly-prepared teachers go on to teach.

## Methodology of this Report

### **Program Selection**

State Board staff identified EPPs that showed improvements both overall and in each of the Report Card metrics from 2017 to 2018 and reached out to those programs for in-depth interviews. Educator preparation providers that were in the top-10 for percentage point improvement overall and in multiple metrics were selected for this analysis. In addition, staff refined the proposed list of EPPs to ensure

regional variation and to capture different provider types, such as public and private, and programs of different sizes.

The programs selected for inclusion this report were:

- Belmont University
- Christian Brothers University
- King University
- Lincoln Memorial University
- Milligan College
- Tennessee Technological University
- Trevecca Nazarene University
- University of Tennessee at Martin

### ***Interview Protocol***

In July 2019, each EPP participated in a 45-minute phone interview during which they explained programmatic changes made in recent years that they believe led to their improvements on the Report Card. The Report Card is based on data from the past three years of teacher candidates, so EPPs discussed programmatic changes that occurred in recent years. SBE staff recorded the interviews and used descriptive coding methods to identify themes and patterns. As needed, staff and EPPs also corresponded over email to clarify and expand upon interview responses.

### **In-Depth Look at Key Findings**

***Finding #1: Combining targeted admissions and recruitment efforts with ongoing cohort monitoring to ensure a pool of strong, diverse teacher candidates.***

Admissions Criteria: Several programs adjusted their admissions criteria in partnership with their college or university to increase selectivity of candidates.

- At UT-Martin, the EPP's ACT requirement is one point higher than the state's EPP minimum admission requirement. UT-Martin made this decision after their data analyst noticed that the eventual TVAAS scores of candidates who were admitted on appeal were systematically lower than those of candidates who met more rigorous requirements. In some cases, students re-took the ACT or Praxis CORE in order to be admitted to the program.
- Lincoln-Memorial University (LMU) also studied data for candidates admitted on appeal and found that those candidates were less likely to pass licensure exams when they were nearing the end of their program. Therefore, LMU raised the bar for admission and limited the amount of candidates admitted on appeal.
- Trevecca Nazarene University raised their EPP program minimum requirements overall, including ACT and GPA.

Recruitment: Some programs worked with their campus' core content and athletic programs to recruit candidates into education.

- LMU's EPP faculty maintain close relationships with all content departments (for example, math, English, or science departments) in which they offer licensure in order to boost cross-disciplinary majors.
- King University partners with athletic coaches to help bolster program enrollment for athletes interested in becoming teachers and coaches. These partnerships can also help increase diversity in the EPP. In addition, King began to provide individual counseling and preparation for licensure exams in order to differentiate support for candidates with various needs. King has found that this additional time and attention has "led to grateful, impassioned candidates" who are excited to begin teaching careers.

**Cohort Monitoring:** Many programs noted that they look at individual candidate data each semester to reflect on and refine plans for those candidates. This practice became especially important in the transition to edTPA as programs monitored and evaluated candidate dispositions and portfolio products, along with classroom performance.

- At Trevecca Nazarene University, each transition point for candidates at the end of a semester allows an opportunity for review, guidance, and continued improvement. The EPP has "stringent gates" at "critical transition points throughout the program" to ensure students are prepared to move to the next level, and candidates receive feedback at each goalpost. Candidates at risk of not passing a licensure assessment are encouraged to take a "Praxis boot camp" the university offers, and students who are truly not meeting expectations are supported in deciding on another major.
- UT Martin uses multiple pieces of data to track students' progress through the program identifying check points for introduction, developing, and mastery of key content through the program. They also reported identifying three check points measuring student dispositions.
- Christian Brothers University also noted an increased effort to counsel students who did not pass the licensure assessments into other majors that may better suit them rather than have them complete the education program without being able to earn an educator license.

***Finding #2: Aligning program design and faculty training with the state teacher evaluation rubric (TEAM) to prepare candidates for expectations in the classroom.***

**TEAM Integration:** Every program interviewed consistently spoke to their integration of the TEAM evaluation rubric and standards in candidate course work with additional emphasis during student teaching observations. This is important as it means new teachers will enter the K-12 classrooms understanding the state's expectations for instruction and familiar with the evaluation and support process.

- UT-Martin prioritized TEAM alignment because most school districts in their vicinity use TEAM. They began using TEAM in student teaching in 2011 and, over the next several years, "began implementing that within courses within the curriculum early on," with the result that candidates were "very familiar with it, its components, the expectations" by the time they entered student teaching placements.
- Belmont University's candidates self-monitor and collaborate with each other using a TEAM rubric during their fieldwork and methods courses.

- Christian Brothers University explained that “we actually had the candidates in field experiences using the TEAM evaluations to analyze what they were seeing in the classroom. We call it analysis of teaching.” This opportunity allows candidates to reflect on other teachers’ strengths and areas for growth and focuses their observation experiences.
- Milligan College utilizes the TEAM rubric for candidate evaluation in multiple courses and clinical experiences.
- At Tennessee Tech, candidates are introduced to the TEAM rubric in their first semester Introduction to Teaching course, where they discuss indicators with faculty and classmates, then review examples of lessons via video and evaluate those lessons using the TEAM rubric.

Faculty Alignment: Most programs have also focused on faculty familiarity with TEAM, Tennessee Academic Standards, and licensure assessments such as Praxis and edTPA.

- King University has requirements for clinical supervisors to attend professional development on the TEAM rubric and implementation.
- Tennessee Tech’s clinical supervisors must attend TEAM training, and the EPP also employs edTPA coaches who are trained to support candidates’ edTPA needs.
- Milligan College requires faculty and clinical supervisors to attend training on the TEAM rubrics.
- Lincoln Memorial University worked with faculty across their campus to ensure candidates in secondary content areas were prepared for licensure assessments. After initial difficulties demonstrating to faculty in Arts and Sciences departments what secondary education candidates would need to know to be successful on licensure assessments, LMU took a novel approach. “We offered to pay for faculty from all of the areas where we offer secondary licensure to go take the content Praxis exam. This was a tremendous success, and they came back with a whole new understanding about how they needed to deal with the students in their classes who were going to be teachers.”
- UT-Martin is on track for all faculty to take Praxis exams related to the content they teach by the end of the 2019-20 school year. Each faculty member will then use what they learn to collaborate with one another to make any course or program adjustments needed.
- Trevecca Nazarene University decided in 2014 to not allow transfer credits to count toward methods courses. Now, “methods courses must be completed at Trevecca with our approved professors” who have had training on the TEAM evaluation process and standards. Trevecca also began considering TEAM evaluation scores when hiring practitioners to support their work.

***Finding #3: Altering field experience and/or clinical placement programming to provide candidates with more experience in the field while still enrolled in the EPP.***

Increased Time in Schools Prior to Clinical Experience: Programs report using different models programs to increase the amount of time candidates spend in schools prior to their formal clinical experience or student teaching.

- Milligan College has increased its clinical experiences prior to student teaching through a Junior Block Experience that is now part of their program. They explained that “as part of a junior year experience for elementary education licensure-seeking candidates, we have something called a junior block experience.” As part of that program, candidates spend two mornings per week in schools in addition to taking specific literacy and pedagogical coursework. Milligan believes this

program creates a more “direct connection” between what candidates learn in their courses and what they experience in schools.

- UT-Martin has expanded the Residency I program to include pre-K, elementary, middle school, secondary, and special education programs. The structure of Residency I provides a more consistent experience as students gain experience and knowledge by participating in the “first days of school” for three weeks and then return to the site at mid-term, attending daily for a seven-week placement. The design of the program has enabled students to increase the experience in the field from 60 hours per term to upwards of 300 hours. When it comes time for Residency II, the students are more prepared and less anxious to begin teaching. UT-Martin reports that “the districts and our partners are very, very impressed by that.”

Preparation for Diverse Settings: Programs have expanded the requirements of their candidates’ pre-clinical practice to include more exposure to diverse settings.

- At Milligan College, elementary candidates have a 75-hour field experience requirement developed in partnership with Johnson City Schools. This 75-hour “Junior Core Block” pairs core content courses on management and literacy with field experience in the district specifically tailored to state literacy efforts such as Read to be Ready. In addition to with their student teaching experience, all candidates are expected to have rural and urban exposure alongside Title 1 school experience.

***Finding #4: Developing stronger partnerships with school districts both regarding specific candidates and district needs overall.***

Pipeline Coordination: Almost all programs reported improving communication and collaboration with their local districts to address staffing needs.

- Tennessee Tech has established an extensive partnership with Putnam and White County Schools through their [Network for Educator Preparation Partnership \(NEPP\)](#). They noted that “we have at least 30 active districts where we have placed our candidates each semester... it definitely requires lots of manpower and womanpower behind the logistics of getting those candidates placed in all those districts and making sure that the communication is strong with the districts.”
- Belmont works in partnership with [Metro Nashville Public Schools](#) through their residency program. Belmont seeks candidates in high-need areas for MNPS and in return, candidates receive hiring priority with the school system.

New Teacher Induction: Some universities already have plans in place to work with alumni who have low overall levels of effectiveness their first year in the classroom (as was required effective January 1, 2019, by TCA § 49-5-5616).

- Belmont has a “[one-year guarantee](#)” that alumni who experience challenges their first year in the classroom can access additional support. This guarantee takes the form of a letter to the hiring principal pledging continued support from Belmont. Belmont faculty work with both the teacher and the principal to ensure success for their program completers through visits, workshops, and email and phone conferences.

- UT-Martin began providing training to over 100 teacher mentors several years ago through a grant called the Teacher Quality Partnership grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education. The [New Teacher Center](#) was the non-profit they contacted with to provide the mentor training for two years. More recently, they have moved this program in-house to ensure sustainable funding. This program supports new teachers whose mentors have this training. In addition, UT-Martin has provided support such as “in-person observation, targeted conversations, and 14 hours of free professional development to new teachers in two districts in our area.” They plan to expand this support in the future to video feedback and the creation of a network of new teachers. Through their initial work, they report seeing improvement in specific teachers.

Professional Development Collaboration: Several programs partner with local school districts to identify and address needs for professional development for both candidates and current teachers.

- Belmont, Lincoln Memorial University, and UT-Martin have developed PD partnerships with their districts that allow faculty, candidates, and current practitioners to learn together and share ideas.
- UT-Martin, Lincoln Memorial University, and Milligan College, all reported creating “Needs Assessments” with their districts. For example, UT-Martin surveyed district partners and EPP alumni about their most significant PD needs. Over 2,000 educators responded and indicated that “their highest needs were for some professional development in classroom management, in teaching strategies, and instruction and technology in the classroom.” UT-Martin then “formulated a plan to meet those needs” that included free summer workshops. To date, they “have held over 100 free professional development workshops for area teachers on those topics. We have served over 1,500 teachers over the past five years.” UT-Martin reports that STEM workshops and programs on classroom organization management ([COMP](#)) have been most successful.

District and State Partnerships: Emerging partnerships between EPPs, districts, and the state department of education’s regional support (CORE) offices are bringing EPPs into further alignment with state and district needs regarding staffing and expertise.

- All of the programs mentioned memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with partner districts that specified more rigorous requirements for clinical mentors from their district partners. By State Board policy, clinical mentors must now have three or more years of experience and overall levels of effectiveness of four or higher.
- King University has developed new partnerships since 2013. They explained that “While Bristol City Schools is our primary partner, we also have MOU arrangements with Sullivan, Washington, Carter, Elizabethton, Hawkins, Kingsport, Hamblen, and several schools in Knox County, which has increased employment opportunities for our students while also meeting the needs of these local district partners.
- UT-Martin has the state CORE office for the Northwest region on their campus, which facilitates partnerships. “We collaborate and they keep us updated on any trainings that they have. So, our office passes along the names of those trainings and the opportunities [to our candidates, and] they let our faculty come and go, just like they would for area teachers. That’s one way our faculty keeps up with the standards and keeps up with what’s going on in the state.” Other EPPs

can reach out to the CORE office located in their region to further partnerships and stay up-to-date with information the state is sharing with current teachers.

***Finding #5: Integrating data analysis into programmatic decision-making.***

Developing Candidates' Data Analysis Practices: Several EPPs teach candidates to identify areas for student growth based on data and monitor that growth over time.

- Candidates at Belmont University implement data-driven practices with public school students during a pre-clinical experience. Their integration with Metro Nashville Public Schools allows candidates to pursue coursework and tutor K-12 students simultaneously. Candidates use the school system's assessment system to evaluate their students' reading levels, design education plans, and evaluate the results. Candidates also get hands-on experience working with IEPs and student behavior plans.
- Tennessee Tech created a data assessment class for their undergraduate candidates. Since then, the EPP shares that, after having several cohorts of candidates take this course, "our scores on the assessment indicator on TEAM have gone up. Our test scores [went up] as well. And also on edTPA: those scores had improved as well."
- UT Martin uses the [TVAAS website](#) in assessment courses to ensure candidates are using the most current TVAAS models to practice reading, analyzing, and responding to student data. Students are better prepared to respond to data challenges for individuals and classes.

EPP Data Collection and Management: All of the programs spoke about how their preparation for the transition from NCATE to CAEP accreditation, as well as their partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education on annual reports improved their data collection and management practices.

- Lincoln Memorial University has focused on building data management systems that can evaluate outcomes as they make programmatic changes.
- Milligan College has created a continuous improvement cycle to monitor gaps and deficits proactively. Milligan found that "CAEP has really encouraged looking more in-depth and more critically with our data and how our data works across indicators." Rather than looking at data points in isolation, Milligan is intentionally tying results from one indicator into a larger picture of how their program is progressing. They found that even if one indicator points to challenges, "that's not the end of the story: we can have systems and a plan in place for improving in that area and continuing to grow."
- Since CAEP review, UT-Martin has created a full-time position for a data coordinator to develop and monitor data systems in one place for EPP, program, and faculty use. As a result, "most of our colleagues now ask for data to support proposed ideas before decisions are made."

Leveraging Additional Expertise: EPPs shared data with new or existing advisory committees of local partners and content experts to gain additional feedback. Some EPPs also created new positions for data analyst to support this work.

- As mentioned previously, Tennessee Tech's NEPP partnership with their local districts was one of the original pilots of enhanced district coordination with EPPs. In 2013, they hired a data and

assessment coordinator to facilitate key candidate assessments, as well as work closely with faculty on program review and data analysis.

- Trevecca Nazarene created an advisory council with stakeholders from MNPS and surrounding districts in which their candidates seek employment to facilitate clinical practices and objective evaluations during clinical placement.
- UT-Martin shared that having a designated data analyst and/or bringing in outside consultants for CAEP preparation was especially helpful in utilizing data to inform program decisions.

## Conclusion

In Tennessee, education preparation providers continue to rise to increasing demands in improving the teacher pipeline. As new initiatives and partnerships develop and deepen between EPPs, districts, and state agencies, common data practices and evaluation standards will prove essential for monitoring our progress. These top improving programs demonstrate the continuous development necessary to maintain our state's growth towards excellence. The State Board will continue to study Report Card data annually to identify and share promising practices, as well as to reflect on and refine state requirements and areas for additional support.

## Acknowledgements

### ***EPPs***

- Belmont University: Andrea McClain and Bryce Sullivan
- Christian Brothers University: Samantha Alperin, Shetauja Coburn, Nancy Wilder
- King University: Randall Gilmore
- Lincoln Memorial University: Teresa Bicknell, Erin Brock, Sylvia Lynch
- Milligan College: Angela Hilton-Prillhart
- Tennessee Technological University: Julie Baker, Amy Brown, Susan Collins, Amanda Roberts
- Trevecca Nazarene University: Judy Bivens, Amy Conditt, Suzie Harris
- University of Tennessee at Martin: Christopher Brown Staci Fuqua, Jenny Hahn, Tina Harrison, Kent Kelso, Donna Neblett, Cynthia West

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## Additional Resources

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