



Tennessee Education Recovery and Innovation Commission

March meeting

March 4, 2022

Today's goals and agenda

We have two primary goals for our time together today:

- 1) Agree on a preliminary framework for the Year 3 report
- 2) Determine policy recommendations commissioners want to make in the Y3 report

ERIC Meeting Agenda — Friday, March 4

Start	Activity	Facilitator
9:00	Gaveling, roll call, business items	Chair Tara Scarlett
9:05	Goals, agenda, and Year 3 overview	Ms. Jennifer Schiess
9:15	Legislative session updates	Chair Tara Scarlett
9:30	Year 3 report framework	Ms. Jennifer Schiess
10:00	Discussion of new policy ideas	Ms. Jennifer Schiess / Dr. Paul Beach
11:55	Closing + next steps	Ms. Jennifer Schiess
12:00	Adjourn	Chair Tara Scarlett

Legislative session updates

Legislative updates 1/3

Bill Number	Sponsors	Aim	Priority Alignment	Status
HB 2300 SB 2328	Rep. Kirk Haston (R) Sen. Joseph Hensley (R)	Early graduates counted for LEA attendance: high school students who graduate early will be counted as enrolled in their LEA for the remainder of the school year for budget allocation purposes.	Strengthen alignment across the K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems	2/15/22 - HB 2300 reset on final calendar of K-12 Subcommittee 2/3/22 - SB 2328 passed on second consideration
HB 2057 SB 2181	Rep. John Ragan (R) Sen. Ferrell Haile (R)	Literacy Success Act annual report: "requires the department of education to produce an annual report concerning the efficacy of training on reading instruction provided by educator preparation providers; requires revocation of state approval for educator preparation providers that fail to meet certain standards."	Ensure students master literacy and numeracy skills	2/23/22 - HB 2057 placed on calendar of the Education Instruction Subcommittee for 3/1/22 2/3/22 - SB 2181 passed on second consideration
HB 1863 SB 2578	Rep. Tandy Darby (R) (and 7 others) Sen. Rusty Crowe (R)	School nurses and counselors: increases BEP funded, full-time public school nurses from previous 1:3000 student ratio to 1:750; BEP formula for FT counselors at a ratio of 1:250 students or one full-time counselor per LEA, whichever is greater.	Equip schools and districts to address students' well-being needs	2/23/22 - HB 1863 placed on calendar of K-12 subcommittee for 3/1/22 2/7/22 - SB 2578 passed on second consideration

Legislative updates 2/3

Bill Number	Sponsors	Aim	Priority Alignment	Status
HB 1948 SB 2560	Rep. Tim Hicks (R)	TCAT programs for high school students: requires THEC to administer TN Tech middle HS program for students who want to receive "a high school diploma and a certificate from an eligible postsecondary institution upon graduation from high school; revises various requirements for dual enrollment grants to allow students participating in the program to receive a grant for each eligible postsecondary course."	Redesign high school to ensure students have access to flexible pathways to college and career	1/28/22 - HB 1948 assigned to Higher Education Subcommittee 2/7/22 - SB 2560 passed on second consideration
HB 1865 SB 2663	Rep. Glen Casada (R) Rep. Scott Cepicky (R)	High school course test out: "requires LEAs to offer high school students high school credit for a course in which the student is not enrolled but for which the student has satisfied the course requirements through an examination - Amends TCA Title 49."	Redesign high school to ensure students have access to flexible pathways to college and career	2/23/22 - HB 1865 placed on the Education Instruction Subcommittee calendar for 3/1/22 2/7/22 - SB 2663 passed on second consideration
HB 2115 SB 2531	Rep. Rick Eldridge (R) plus 6 others Sen. Ferrell Haile (R) and 6 others	Dual admissions to a 2-year and public university: "removes the geographic or programmatic considerations when THEC adopts a dual admissions policy in which a person who satisfies the admissions requirements of a two-year institution governed by the board of regents and a public university while pursuing a degree program within a transfer pathway program of study is authorized to be admitted to both such institutions"	Redesign high school to ensure students have access to flexible pathways to college and career	2/23/22 - HB 2115 placed on Higher Education Subcommittee for 3/1/22 2/7/22 - SB 2531 passed on second consideration

Legislative updates 3/3

Bill Number	Sponsors	Aim	Priority Alignment	Status
SB 2370 HB 1959	Sen. Jon Lundberg (R) Rep. Dave Wright (R)	High school TCAT completion: “creates an opportunity for high school students to complete a state college of applied technology program by the student's graduation from high school.”	Redesign high school to ensure students have access to flexible pathways to college and career	2/23/22 - SB 2370 recommended for passage with amendments 2/23/22 - HB 1959 referred to Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee calendar for 3/2/22
SB 2369 HB 1964	Sen. Jon Lundberg (R) Rep. Tim Rudd (R) (and 6 others)	Virtual Learning Drills/EPP/materials: "requires LEAs to conduct virtual learning drills; requires that educator preparation providers provide instruction on skills to administer virtual instruction to candidates seeking licensure to teach; requires LEAs to adopt, and the textbook commission to recommend for adoption, textbooks and instructional materials that are electronically accessible."	Optimize capacity for flexible, high-quality school options	2/3/22 - SB 2369 passed on second consideration 1/28/22 - HB 1964 placed on Education Instruction Subcommittee calendar for 3/1/22
SB 2017 HB 2088	Sen. Jon Lundberg (R) Rep. Mark White (R)	Teacher training program expansion: “removes the exclusion that state colleges or universities may only contract with a local school board within the county or city in which the state college or university is located to operate a training school for pre-kindergarten through grade 12; authorizes state colleges or universities to contract with the state board of education to operate a training school.”	Strengthen, retain, expand, and diversify the state's education professionals.	2/23/22 - SB 2017 recommended for passage with amendments 2/24/22 - HB 2088 placed on Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee calendar for 3/2/22

Year 3 report framework

The goal for today is to settle on a framework for the Y3 report so the outline and drafting process can commence

March 4 Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commissioners align on framework for the Year 3 report
Independent work in March and April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bellwether creates preliminary Year 3 outline• Bellwether conducts follow-up 1:1s with commissioners
April 29 Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commissioners finalize the Year 3 report outline
Independent work in May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bellwether drafts the Year 3 report• Bellwether conducts follow-up 1:1s with commissioners• Bellwether revises the Year 3 report
June 10 Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commissioners discuss feedback and make final revisions to the Year 3 report• Commissioners adopt the Year 3 report

Reaching consensus on the direction for the Year 3 report today is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient time to conduct at least two review cycles (one for the outline and one for the report draft) before the final June 10th meeting

During 1:1 interviews, commissioners were generally aligned on the overall direction and format for the final report

During 1:1 calls with commissioners, Bellwether heard that the Y3 report should:

- Begin with **framing around the purpose of the commission, its vision, and its charge**
- **Be shorter** than the Y2 report
- **Stand alone** from the Y2 report
- Provide a **short recap of the Y2 priorities** and a **discussion of any legislative actions** related to those priorities and corresponding recommendations
- **Include fewer policy recommendations** (i.e., describe the Y2 recommendations that have been revised and any new recommendations that come from the Y3 ERIC meetings)
- **Be forward looking** and make strong recommendations for the high-level areas of focus that the state needs to address in order for these recommendations to be realized
- **Include a strong focus on action** and **charge the state with not losing the momentum** the commission has created
- **Be visionary** and describe what is possible in the future (grounded in the success metrics) if the state takes up the commission's recommendations
- **Provide a narrative arc** that connects the Y1, Y2, and Y3 reports for readers

Does all of this sound directionally right? Is anything missing?

Next steps: Bellwether will use feedback from this conversation to draft a Year 3 report outline to share with commissioners during 1:1s in March and April

Policy ideas discussion

As a reminder, in July we aligned on a framework for whether an option or idea should be included, refined, or eliminated

We asked you for suggestions on criteria. This is what you said....

1. **Scale of impact** → how many students/people are affected?
2. **Equity of impact** → which students/people are affected? how are students/people furthest from opportunity benefitting?
3. **Evidence base** → what does research tell us about the idea? exemplars from other places?
4. **Innovation** → leave room for a lower evidence threshold and new ideas (not contraindicated by evidence? consider any guardrails?)
5. **Policy feasibility** → is this something that policy can reasonably address?
6. **Political feasibility** → is this something that we can envision as politically possible?
7. **Practical feasibility** → can the idea be implemented?
8. **Necessity** → is the idea additive to what's already in place?
9. **Cost** → does the idea meet some threshold of reasonableness in terms of cost?
10. **Timeline of impact** → does the idea address an immediate or short-term challenge? does it contribute to long-term goals?
11. **Measurability** → can we track impact? can we know it's working?
12. **Accountability** → what structures are in place to ensure high-quality implementation?

Are these still the right criteria for whether a recommendation should be included in the final report?

What criteria should be added, removed, or revised?

We've structured the rest of this morning around the four content modules that commissioners received in January

We'll follow a similar format for each content module we discuss:

- Where is there already considerable alignment among commissioners on this topic (based on [survey data](#))?
- What questions or concerns need to be raised and discussed?
- On which recommendations is there emerging alignment among commissioners?
- Where can we address questions to determine which recommendations are on and off the table?

Next steps

- Identify clear next steps for moving forward:
 - Are there pieces the commission is ready to vote on?
- Take preliminary votes on additional recommendations as needed, based on today's discussion.

Commissioners received the following content modules in January 2022

1. Innovation
2. Curriculum
3. Teacher compensation and benefits
 - Teacher compensation
 - Teacher retirement benefits
4. Secondary-postsecondary transition
5. Postsecondary course options
 - Core curriculum requirements
 - Hybrid learning
 - Non-degree credentials
6. School accountability

We have a lot to cover today, so we're going to do our best to keep us moving productively toward consensus. If we're getting bogged down, we'll move on and revisit that topic during the April 29th ERIC meeting.

The following slides show the alignment between new recommendations and Y2 priorities and recommendations

This box will indicate whether the potential policy recommendations are aligned with

- any of the **nine priority areas** from the Year 2 report
- the **recommendations** made in the Year 2 report

Color-coding system for potential policy recommendations

We will focus most of our time on the yellow recommendations. These represent areas where there was a mix of “yes” and “maybe” votes with no more than two “no” votes.

We will briefly review light green. This color indicates a majority of commissioners support it, with only one “no” vote.

If we have time, we will review light pink for possible inclusion. The voting by commissioners indicated a strong split of votes.

We will not discuss green areas except to confirm they have commission support. These had zero “no” votes.

We will not review dark pink unless a commissioner wishes to advocate for one of them. These areas had little support from the commissioners.

Innovation

Priority alignment: *Incentivize locally led innovation*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Create an innovation hub at the state level to support local innovation, including rigorous evaluation and robust dissemination and scaling opportunities for successful strategies.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Revise the existing iZone legislation beyond the state's lowest performing schools to allow districts to create networks based on other criteria (e.g., high-performing schools, schools with particular focus areas such as STEM).	4	4	1
Create new grant opportunities focused on innovation (e.g., postsecondary transitions, early literacy and math).	9	0	0
Create an office of innovation within TDOE to serve as the "innovation hub" recommended in the Year 2 report.	5	2	2
Provide funding to support the launch of an education-focused accelerator.	6	0	3

Curriculum

Priority alignment:

- The first two recommendations could align with the following priority: *Address learning remediation and acceleration needs.*
- The third recommendation would fit with the following priority: *Strengthen, retain, expand, and diversify the state's education professionals.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *1 & 2: Support early interventions and research-based materials and instruction for K-12 students to minimize the need for postsecondary remediation.*
- *3: Create or expand high-quality, research-based, state-facilitated professional development opportunities to support teachers in using data to inform their instruction and meet the needs of individual students.*
- *1&2: Establish evidence-based curriculum recommendations for early numeracy.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Develop common definitions of high-quality curriculum and objective rubrics to evaluate materials.	9	0	0
Incentivize districts to use the highest-rated materials.	8	1	0
Increase curriculum-based professional development.	9	0	0

Teacher compensation and benefits

Priority alignment: *Strengthen, retain, expand, and diversify the state's education professionals.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Create new state-operated financial incentive programs for highly effective teachers and leaders.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Reinstate statewide financial support for hiring and retention bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff positions and low-performing schools.	9	0	0
Direct the TDOE and THEC and Student Assistance Corporation to better communicate loan forgiveness and fellowship opportunities on their websites.	7	2	0
Update data collection process and guidance around differentiated pay.	6	3	0
Increase interest credit on early withdrawal.	5	2	2
Increase alternatives for retirement options.	7	1	1
Increase portability of the defined benefit (DB) component of the plan.	6	2	1
Decrease the teacher vesting period to three years.	4	2	3

Secondary-postsecondary transitions (1 of 2)

Priority alignment: *Redesign high school to ensure students have access to flexible pathways to college and career.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Incentivize districts to support students in accessing a meaningful senior-year capstone experience such as an apprenticeship, a co-op, an internship, or another industry- or work-based learning experience, including opportunities to earn both course credit and wages.*
- *Incentivize the expansion of existing mentoring programs to support students in exploring and aligning their career goals and postsecondary pathways.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Adopt and implement a program that includes this content and operates after school, during the summer, or during school breaks.	5	3	1
Partner with nonprofit organizations to provide postsecondary transition services to students.	4	3	1
Strengthen the individualized learning plan process to include deliberate postsecondary and career planning aspects.	8	1	0

Secondary-postsecondary transitions (2 of 2)

Priority alignment: *Redesign high school to ensure students have access to flexible pathways to college and career.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Incentivize districts to support students in accessing a meaningful senior-year capstone experience such as an apprenticeship, a co-op, an internship, or another industry- or work-based learning experience, including opportunities to earn both course credit and wages.*
- *Incentivize the expansion of existing mentoring programs to support students in exploring and aligning their career goals and postsecondary pathways.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Create a separate high school course that focuses exclusively on this content (and potentially results in one postsecondary credit).	5	2	2
Embed transition content into an existing, required high school course (e.g., civics).	4	1	4
Use the senior year capstone structure to provide transition planning.	4	4	1

Postsecondary course options: Core curriculum requirements (context)

Commissioners must first decide if the current core requirements align with their vision for producing well-educated individuals prepared for life and citizenship. Most commissioners did not feel strongly about this question.

Important recent events surrounding core curriculum requirements in TN:

- The University of Tennessee at Knoxville as well as other UT campuses have recently revised its core course requirements, effective fall of 2022. The revision process was initiated in 2017 and took five years to complete.
- TBR is currently reviewing core requirements for its colleges.

Before considering potential policy recommendations, commissioners were asked the following:	Yes	Maybe	No
Do you believe the current TBR and University of Tennessee general (core) education requirements are aligned with producing well-educated individuals prepared for life and citizenship?	1	7	1

Postsecondary course options: Core curriculum requirements (1 of 2)

Priority alignment: *Streamline postsecondary systems to facilitate lifelong learning.*

Recommendation alignment: *Not applicable*

Commissioners who answered yes or maybe considered the following recommendations:	Yes	Maybe	No
Add courses such as computing or coding that are aligned to the skills needed in many in-demand jobs.	5	2	1
Consider the balance of credits and suggest changes (e.g., currently, 9 of the 41 required credits in the TBR system are in the field of communications, while just 3 are in math. Is that the right balance?).	5	2	1
Add courses such as foreign languages that are aligned to the needs of an increasingly globalized world.	3	2	3

Postsecondary course options: Core curriculum requirements (2 of 2)

Priority alignment: *Strengthen alignment across the K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Develop a comprehensive advising/mentoring initiative not tied explicitly to subpopulations of financial aid recipients.*

If they answered yes or maybe, commissioners considered the following recommendations:

Add a “first year experience”-type course to help support students as they transition to postsecondary.

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Postsecondary course options: Hybrid education

Priority alignment: *Streamline postsecondary systems to facilitate lifelong learning.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Pilot competency-based delivery models in higher education to identify existing models and scalable best practices.*
- *Create a pilot program at a set of community colleges to test the success of alternative scheduling, such as block scheduling or year-round scheduling, in meeting the needs of nontraditional students.*
- *Task THEC with developing workforce-responsive/academic program approval policies at postsecondary institutions.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Recommend a review of TBR and state university system hybrid programs and courses to determine which institutions are offering them, evaluate their value to students and faculty, and identify how the state can best support hybrid learning.	7	2	0
Access previous partnerships between EdX and University of Tennessee programs to evaluate how those programs or courses were received by students, and what lessons could be learned.	6	2	1
Identify an established online provider such as EdX to develop a pilot program in partnership with one or more public Tennessee universities and/or colleges, ideally in a high-demand career area.	6	1	2

Postsecondary course options: Non-degree credentials

Priority alignment: *Strengthen alignment across the K-12, postsecondary, and workforce systems.*

Recommendation alignment:

- *Align incentives across K-12 and postsecondary public funding systems to encourage systems to collaborate, prioritize flexibility for students, maximize student success, and minimize the cost and time to degrees and industry certificates employers are seeking, and remove disincentives for school districts to support students in accelerating high school completion.*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Require THEC, TDOE, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to align work to avoid duplicating efforts and to ensure youth and adults seeking quality non-degree credentials are provided with consistent information.	9	0	0
Ensure that the agencies tasked with tracking non-degree credentials are collecting adequate data including industry trends, outcomes, and individual demographics.	9	0	0
Ensure that the agencies tasked with overseeing non-degree credentials develop partnerships with organizations outside of higher education that offer non-degree credentials as well as those that provide technical assistance and implementation support.	8	1	0

A note about the difference between school accountability policy and general accountability for the use of public funds

School Accountability

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) created the baseline expectations for states' **school accountability systems**, which includes but is not limited to:

- setting goals on specific measures of student performance
- rating schools according to performance on those measures
- identifying schools with persistently low ratings and intervening in those schools

In 2016, the Tennessee legislature adopted a statewide letter grade system for its public schools. However, Tennessee has delayed the implementation of the A-F system.

General Accountability

School accountability in policy should not be conflated with the **general idea of accountability for the use of public funds** by

- school districts
- public postsecondary institutions
- state agencies
- policymakers

The core principle of general accountability is that policymakers and governmental institutions are accountable for meeting goals and objectives using taxpayer dollars.

These systems may be supported with policy (e.g., required evaluations, sunsets on new initiatives pending evidence of positive impact) or may be more related to management and oversight.

The following recommendations are aligned with school accountability, whereas ERIC's draft success metrics are examples of potential general accountability metrics.

School Accountability (1 of 2)

Priority alignment: *None currently*

Recommendation alignment: *Not applicable*

We asked commissioners for their interest in revisiting a recommendation related to A to F and/or accountability	Yes	Maybe	No
Should commissioners consider a recommendation related to implementation of Tennessee's A-F accountability system and communicating with parents and stakeholders about what the ratings mean and how to use them?	6	2	0

School accountability (2 of 2)

Priority alignment: *None currently*

Recommendation alignment: *Not applicable*

Potential Policy Recommendations	Yes	Maybe	No
Create a different measure of school quality and success from that currently in Tennessee's ESSA. Examples of other potential indicators include suspension or expulsion rates, ratings of school safety, access to effective career guidance and counseling, or teacher attrition, retention, and mobility.	4	4	1
Consider other changes the state could make within its approach to federal accountability requirements under ESSA, which could include one, some, or all of the following: changes to the type of standardized testing the state uses to assess students and schools; adjustments to how the state identifies schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional support; any other state-level choice where ESSA provides flexibility and discretion.	3	4	2

Next steps

Adjourn

Appendix

Innovation — week of 1/24

Overview

- There are four primary ways that states promote and support innovation in districts, schools, and classrooms: (a) innovation schools, zones, and districts; (b) innovation grants; (c) innovation learning networks; and (d) offices of innovation.
- In addition to these state actions, so-called “accelerators” can help entrepreneurs develop, test, and scale their ideas in local schools and communities.
- Tennessee’s Innovation Zone (iZone) policy allows school districts with multiple priority schools (those in the bottom 5% of achievement statewide) to create iZones – networks of that district’s lowest-performing schools.
- Tennessee also has several innovation grants in place (e.g., IDEA Innovation Grant).
- Tennessee launched the Tennessee Rural Acceleration and Innovation Network (TRAIN) in fall 2020 to create a network for rural districts to address the challenges of teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Potential Policy Recs

- Revise the existing iZone legislation beyond the state’s lowest performing schools to allow districts to create networks based on other criteria (e.g., high-performing schools, schools with particular focus areas such as STEM).
- Create new grant opportunities focused on innovation (e.g., postsecondary transitions, early literacy and math).
- Create an office of innovation within TDOE to serve as the “innovation hub” recommended in the Year 2 report.
- Provide funding to support the launch of an education-focused accelerator.

Curriculum — week of 1/31

Overview

- **Standards** describe what students will know or be able to do upon completion of a grade level or course.
- **Curriculum** provides the instructional roadmap and content required to gain that knowledge or skill.
- In Tennessee, the State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission is responsible for recommending an official list of textbooks and instructional materials that is approved by the State Board of Education.
- Aside from publishing its state-approved list of curriculum materials, Tennessee does not provide statewide supports for curriculum implementation.
- A 2017 RAND analysis found that 96% of teachers use Google and 75% of teachers use Pinterest to find lessons and materials; still more use materials from prior years and sites like TeachersPayTeachers, or work alone or with colleagues to design their own resources.
- The culmination of this research shows that districts, schools, and teachers need technical support for both identifying and implementing high-quality curriculum materials.

Potential Policy Recs

- Develop common definitions of high-quality curriculum and objective rubrics to evaluate materials.
- Incentivize districts to use the highest-rated materials.
- Increase curriculum-based professional development.

Teacher compensation and benefits (slide 1 of 2) — week of 1/31

Overview

- Some research shows that teachers with higher salaries relative to non-teaching salaries in the same county are more likely to stay in teaching.
- Some research suggests teacher loan forgiveness and service scholarship programs can support the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers into the fields and communities where they are most needed.
- Some research has shown that bonuses have also been found to increase recruitment and retention.
- The research is mixed with respect to pay for performance.
- Tennessee pays its teachers using a salary schedule that accounts for a teachers' education and years of service, meaning teachers earn more money the longer they work and if they have an advanced degree (e.g., Master's, EdD, PhD). The salary schedule represents the minimum salary requirements, with districts encouraged to provide additions to the base for factors like hard-to-staff positions and retaining highly qualified teachers.
- Tennessee has implemented several types of financial incentives to recruit and retain high-quality teachers: (a) signing and retention bonuses, (b) diversified and pay-for-performance, (c) loan forgiveness and fellowship programs, (d) Grow Your Own Teaching Apprenticeship Program, and (e) discounts for dependents of public school teachers.

Potential Policy Recs

- Reinstate statewide financial support for hiring and retention bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff positions and low-performing schools.
- Direct the Tennessee Department of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Student Assistance Corporation to better communicate loan forgiveness and fellowship opportunities on their websites.
- Update data collection process and guidance around differentiated pay.

Teacher compensation and benefits (slide 2 of 2) — week of 1/31

Overview

- Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia provide teachers with a traditional defined benefit (DB) pension plan as the default retirement option. In a DB pension plan, teachers and their employers (the state or local government) make contributions to the pension system, and teachers receive a guaranteed level of benefits when they retire.
- In three states, they have default retirement plans that are more like a 401(k). Under these plans, which are also known as defined contribution (DC) plans, teachers and employers annually contribute a percentage of a teacher's salary into an individual account for that teacher.
- Ten states — including Tennessee — use hybrid retirement plans as the default option for teachers. These plans incorporate features from both the DB and DC plans.
- In Tennessee, teachers who started prior to July 2014 are a part of the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System, which also includes all state employees.
- Since July 2014, new teachers are enrolled into the state's Hybrid Retirement Plan for State Employees and Teachers, which combines elements of a pension plan and a defined contribution (DC) plan.
- Overall, Tennessee ranked 2nd in the country in a Bellwether Education Partner analysis. Tennessee had high scores for long-term teachers and ranked 2nd in the country, but for short-term teachers the ranking dropped to 6th. Bellwether noted that Tennessee has solid overall funding, but lacks an alternative retirement option and scored low on interest credit on early withdrawal.

Potential Policy Recs

- Increase interest credit on early withdrawal.
- Increase alternatives for retirement options.
- Increase portability of the defined benefit (DB) component of the plan.
- Decrease the teacher vesting period to three years.

Secondary-postsecondary transitions — week of 1/10

Overview

- Research on other states' approaches points to three ways that states and districts help students obtain the information they need to identify and access postsecondary opportunities:
 - Partnerships with nonprofit organizations
 - Individualized learning plans
 - Senior year capstone experiences
- Across the country, states and districts have partnered with nonprofit organizations focused on postsecondary access and success, such as College Advising Corps or Naviance, to support students' access to in-person or virtual college advisors.
- Individual learning plans can be a document and process students use to explore their career interests and determine what courses and activities to participate in.
- Some schools and districts offer high school seniors the opportunity to participate in a “capstone” project or experience. Most commonly, senior capstone projects take the form of long-term research projects that culminate in a written and/or oral presentation to teachers and classmates.

Potential Policy Recs

- Create a separate high school course that focuses exclusively on content related to postsecondary transitions (e.g., application and financial aid processes, selecting programs and career paths) and potentially results in one postsecondary credit.
- Adopt and implement a program that includes content related to postsecondary transitions (e.g., application and financial aid processes, selecting programs and career paths) and operates after school, during the summer, or during school breaks.
- Embed transition content into an existing, required high school course (e.g., civics).
- State partners with and/or incentivizes districts to partner with nonprofit organizations to provide postsecondary transition services to students (e.g., FAFSA completion support, mentorship programs).
- Strengthen the individualized learning plan process to include deliberate postsecondary and career planning aspects.
- Use the senior year capstone structure to provide transition planning.

Postsecondary course options (slide 1 of 3) – week of 1/24

Overview

- In general, postsecondary institutions require a set of general education courses in order to build the core competencies and skills that students need to lead productive lives post-graduation, regardless of their specific major or career path.
- The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) states that the purpose of general education requirements is “to equip every student to pursue a challenging career, experience a rewarding personal life, and inspire others to do the same.
- Each TBR community college in Tennessee requires at least 41 hours of coursework from the following 6 categories (course hours required): (a) communication, (b) humanities/fine arts, (c) social/behavioral sciences, (d) history, (e) natural sciences, and (f) mathematics.
- The UT system does not appear to have a universal set of core curriculum requirements, based on a review of individual and system websites.
- UTK completed a review of its core course requirements in 2017 and will implement new requirements beginning in the fall of 2022. Currently, its general education requirements align closely with the TBR requirements.

Potential Policy Recs

(If revisions are deemed necessary, consider the following)

- Add a “first year experience”-type course to help support students as they transition to postsecondary.
- Add courses such as computing or coding that are aligned to the skills needed in many in-demand jobs.
- Add courses such as foreign languages that are aligned to the needs of an increasingly globalized world.
- The state should reassess the balance of credits in the TBR system (e.g., currently, 9 of the 41 required credits in the TBR system are in the field of communications, while just 3 are in math. Is that the right balance?).

Postsecondary course options (slide 2 of 3) – week of 1/24

Overview

- Hybrid models are typically characterized by alternating between in-person instruction within a traditional school setting and at-home (or another alternative site) instruction, where students attend in-person at school on designated days of the week, benefitting from direct instruction and classroom interaction, and complete assignments at home on the remaining days of the week.
- Proponents of hybrid learning claim it can increase educational innovation and participation by increased flexibility, improving assessments, and providing better access for students.
- Challenges to hybrid education include lack of teacher training and experience, less familiarity among older and nontraditional students, and inadequate software and broadband infrastructure.
- There's little to no research on the effectiveness of hybrid learning at the K-12 level, given its recent emergence.
- Many of Tennessee's community colleges and some four-year institutions offer hybrid courses.

Potential Policy Recs

- Recommend a review of TBR and state university system hybrid programs and courses to determine which institutions are offering them, evaluate their value to students and faculty, and identify how the state can best support hybrid learning.
- Access previous partnerships between EdX and University of Tennessee programs to evaluate how those programs or courses were received by students, and what lessons could be learned.
- Identify an established online provider such as EdX to develop a pilot program in partnership with one or more public Tennessee universities and/or colleges, ideally in a high-demand career area.

Postsecondary course options (slide 3 of 3) – week of 1/31

Overview

- All non-degree credentials provide a mechanism for individuals to show they possess a certain set of defined competencies.
- Examples of non-degree credentials include: (a) subbaccalaureate for-credit certificates, (b) non-credit certificates, (c) industry certifications, (d) occupational or professional licenses, (e) apprenticeships, and (f) badges and other microcredentials.
- The research base on non-degree credentials is severely limited due to the lack of definitional clarity in the field and from a lack of valid and reliable data.
- There is significant variation in the design, quality, and market value of non-degree credentials in general and within particular occupations and industries.
- The market and academic value of non-degree credentials is dependent on economic differences across regions and the degree requirements at postsecondary institutions.
- A THEC task force on Defining Quality Credentials is currently working to establish a definition for quality credentials.
- The TDOE worked with several state agencies and other stakeholders to develop a system that provided secondary and postsecondary students with a list of “department-promoted” industry certifications.

Potential Policy Recs

- Recommend that the work of THEC, TDOE, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development is aligned to avoid duplicating efforts and to ensure youth and adults seeking quality non-degree credentials are provided with consistent information.
- Ensure that the agencies tasked with tracking non-degree credentials are collecting adequate data including industry trends, outcomes, and individual demographics.
- Ensure that the agencies tasked with overseeing non-degree credentials develop partnerships with organizations outside of higher education that offer non-degree credentials as well as those that provide technical assistance and implementation support.

School accountability (slide 1 of 2) — week of 1/10

Overview

- While accountability systems themselves do not raise student achievement or address inequities across student groups, they can do several important things:
 - Set clear expectations that schools must raise the achievement of all students
 - Communicate with stakeholders and the public whether schools are meeting expectations
 - Celebrate schools that are meeting expectations and prompt action in those that are not
 - Direct additional resources to struggling schools
- The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) created the baseline expectations for states' accountability systems. It requires states to:
 - Set goals on specific measures of student performance
 - Place schools in need of support and improvement into three categories: (a) comprehensive support and improvement schools, (b) targeted support and improvement schools, and (c) additional targeted support and improvement schools
 - Annually and publicly report state and district accountability data
- ESSA provides considerable flexibility to states to design an accountability system that best meets the needs of the schools and students in that state.

Potential Policy Recs

- Create a different measure of school quality and success from that currently in Tennessee's ESSA. Examples of other potential indicators include suspension or expulsion rates, ratings of school safety, access to effective career guidance and counseling, or teacher attrition, retention, and mobility.

School accountability (slide 2 of 2) — week of 1/10

School Accountability in Tennessee

Overview

- Tennessee's A-F school rating system has been on the books since 2016, but has yet to be implemented.
- TDOE assesses each public school using 6 indicators:
 - Achievement
 - Growth
 - Ready Graduate
 - Graduation rate
 - Chronically out of school
 - English language proficiency assessment
- School performance is assessed in each area for the following student groups:
 - All students
 - Black/Hispanic/Native American students
 - English learners
 - Students with disabilities
 - Economically disadvantaged students
 - Combined (including students across the 4 subgroups)
- Final A-F grades are calculated by weighting the “all students” group and subgroup grades at 60% and 40%, respectively. Schools are then assigned one of three designations:
 - Priority schools
 - Focus schools (Targeted support and improvement and Additional targeted support and improvement)
 - Rewards schools

Potential Policy Recs

- Consider a recommendation related to implementation of Tennessee's A-F accountability system and communicating with parents and stakeholders about what the ratings mean and how to use the.
- Consider other changes the state could make within its approach to federal accountability requirements under ESSA, which could include one, some, or all of the following: changes to the type of standardized testing the state uses to assess students and schools; adjustments to how the state identifies schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional support; any other state-level choice where ESSA provides flexibility and discretion.