



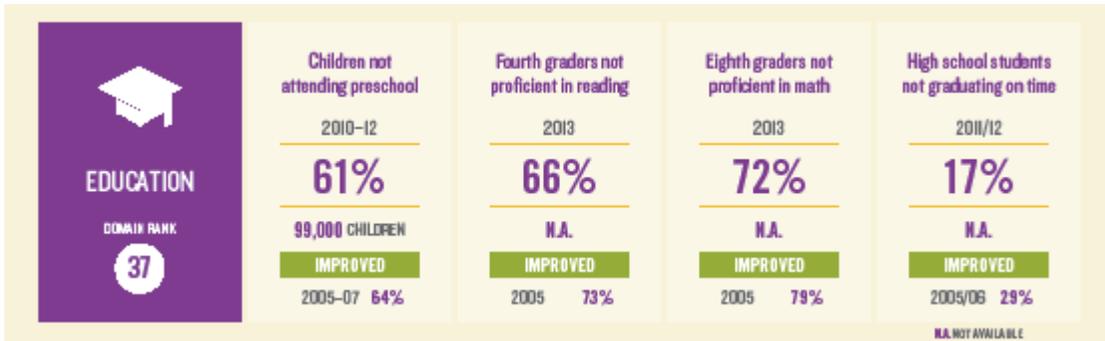
Advocate

August 2014

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Tennessee Rises in KIDS COUNT Ranking

Tennessee is 36th this year in the annual KIDS COUNT National Data Book ranking on child well-being, better than its 39th ranking in 2013. The state is among the five states with the biggest improvements in overall rankings from 2013 to 2014. The Data Book rates states on four domains: Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. Each domain is comprised of four measures. When the most recently available data were compared to those from 2005, Tennessee improved on 10 of the 16 measures, worsened on five and remained the same on one, paralleling national changes. The state ranked 37th on the Education domain, an improvement from 42nd in the past two years.



- 25th Edition: KIDS COUNT National Data Book, 2014 is available online at www.aecf.org.
- Indicator data are available at bit.ly/15alkVu.
- Short YouTube videos on the Tennessee data in the report are available at <http://bit.ly/tccyfb25>.

Welcome Back to School

Teachers and students have returned to school across the state.

According to the National Education Association, Tennessee public school teachers earn on average 85 percent of the national average teacher's salary. A recent report listed Tennessee as having low spending and a weak school system, although Tennessee ranked 41st in spending and 28th in performance in the report. The organization's writers said investments in education lift economies, quoting Economic Policy Institute (EPI) research that states whose citizens earn higher wages are those with a well-educated workforce. (See EPI graphic below.)



- Tennessee Department of Education website <http://bit.ly/tccyad22>.

How Can We Assure Tennessee Students Can Compete in the Global Marketplace?

Tennessee has plenty of room to improve its education programs, but ranking 37th on education in the 2014 KIDS COUNT report while ranking near the bottom in spending on education shows that hard work and good policies can make a difference. But, based on the rankings, can Tennesseans compete for jobs with states that invest more in education? How can we lure high-paying jobs to the state? And, can the United States maintain its economic leadership when U.S. students' performance ranks low in international comparisons?

Efforts to measure students' progress have been limited by pressure to lower standards so that "all the students are above average." However, the fact remains: To improve education, citizens need to know what students are learning and where education gaps are.

Earlier in this century, the National Governors Association (NGA) began to explore ways to keep the United States competitive. The NGA linked with the Council of Chief State School Officers and with teachers' professional groups to identify things U.S. students need to know. Standards were published for outside comments. A set of standards was adopted, and they are now being taught to Tennessee teachers, using their peers as part of the process.

A substantial proportion of state funds help educate children – with half the funds spent on services to children in the state's budget going to education. We need to know we are getting our money's worth. It is likely no one has developed the perfect plan to measure how schools are responding to students who come from a variety of income groups, neighborhoods, levels of family stress and home languages, with different skill levels and developmental stages, but the task has begun.

When a graduate of a Tennessee high school competes for a job with a graduate of a Massachusetts or Connecticut high school, the employer needs to be confident they can begin work with the same knowledge and skills. Efforts continue to ensure all students are gaining the skills they need.

More information on these efforts is available at <http://bit.ly/tccyad36>.

Tennessee Promise

Governor Bill Haslam proposed, and the Legislature passed, what he called the first-in-the-nation program to open up Tennessee community and technical college enrollment to Tennessee high school graduates for free for two years. Tennessee now ranks 42nd in the number of college graduates. The program, Tennessee Promise, is a tool to meet the administration's Drive to 55 goal of educating 55 percent of Tennesseans with college degrees or certifications by 2025. Students who graduate high school in spring 2015 and fulfill program requirements may enroll in fall 2015. Tennessee Promise pays expenses not covered by Pell, Hope or other scholarships.

According to a 2010 report by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, the average age of a community college student was 28, and half of the students were older than age 23. Two of every three students were part-time. According to Tennessee Promise, 30 percent of students enrolled in Tennessee public undergraduate programs are adults. The Drive to 55 program is planning Tennessee Reconnect to help adults with some college credits return to school.

Resources on these programs include:

- Program requirements: <http://bit.ly/1rdnsdB>;
- High school seniors may begin to meet the requirements for the program by applying before Nov. 1 at <http://bit.ly/tccyad30>;
- Facts about community college students: <http://bit.ly/tccyad25> ;
- *Community College Student outcomes: 1994-2009*: <http://bit.ly/tccyad37>.

Children Must Be Ready for School Before They Can Be Ready for College

Tennessee asks a lot of its educators and school systems. The Governor's Children's Cabinet created the Tennessee School Readiness Model listing elements needed for children to be prepared for that crucial first day. The model identifies qualities of Ready Communities, Ready Schools, Ready Families and Ready Children.

The model speaks to us as a state and a community, recommending that in Ready Communities:

- Children have access to high-quality early care and education programs;
- Teachers in early care and education programs are well prepared to work with children and within their communities;
- Physical and mental health and support services are provided to families;
- Early childhood agencies and organization provide leadership and focus;
- Data are collected and used in planning and resource allocation.

Early childhood education, including pre-K, has a proven record of preparing students, especially at-risk students, for school, but only eight states had a lower percentage of preschool students than Tennessee in the 2014 *KIDS COUNT National Data Book*.

Resources:

- *Tennessee School Readiness Model*, Governor's Children's Cabinet kidcentral tn: <http://bit.ly/tccyad26>;
- *kidscentral tn*: Governor's Children's Cabinet, Information source for families: <http://bit.ly/tccyad27>;
- *Early Learning Information and Resources*, Tennessee Department of Education: <http://bit.ly/tccyad33>;
- *Parents Know, Children Grow*, Tennessee Department of Human Services, information, including child care resources: <http://bit.ly/tccyad28>;
- *Books from Birth*: <http://bit.ly/tccyad38>.

Getting Ready for School: Health

Getting and verifying required vaccinations has long been a standard pre-school ritual. Vaccination has been one of the triumphs against disease over the centuries. While the crude small pox inoculation practiced by Abigail Adams, among others, was effective, a better understanding of the causes of disease led to vaccines, resulting in the eradication of diphtheria, for example, one of the top 10 leading causes of death in 1900. Perhaps because the speed of health-care advances has given a sense we have conquered disease or because researchers have only begun to scratch the surface of the complexity of the brain, routine vaccinations have come under attack, raising

fears of a loss of herd immunity and the return of long-forgotten diseases.

A recent study by the well-respected Rand Corporation, funded by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, reviewed scientific studies on routine childhood vaccines, finding overwhelmingly that vaccinations are safe, with the incidence of side effects extremely rare.

Tennessee schools have led the nation in improving school health, including legislation limiting unhealthy snacks and state-funded Coordinated School Health Programs in every school system. The link between health, including nutrition and vision services, for example, and learning success, has been proven through decades of research. If Tennessee wants to continue to improve its education rankings, it must assure access to health care and healthy food for all students.

Resources:

- *U.S. Vaccines Deemed Extremely Safe, with Serious Side Effects Rare Among Children*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA: <http://bit.ly/tccyad31>;
- *Tennessee Required Immunizations*, Tennessee Department of Health: <http://bit.ly/tccyad32>;
- *School Health information*, Centers for Disease Control: <http://bit.ly/tccyad34>;
- *Tennessee Coordinated School Health*, Tennessee Department of Education: <http://bit.ly/tccyad35>.

Celebrations!

Governor's Books from Birth Foundation has its own birthday. The foundation is celebrating 10 years of sharing the joy of reading and 20 million books with Tennessee children by taking a month-long, statewide bus tour beginning Aug. 26, traveling through 50 counties and culminating at Legislative Plaza on Sept. 30. Bus stops along the way will recognize volunteers and donors, allow families to sign up for the program and spread the word about the success of Books from Birth. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/tccyad38>.

Students Say "Thank You." We at TCCY are big fans of Kid President, whose team we honored with a Making KIDS COUNT Media Award in 2013. Kid President recently joined teachers and former students of Nashville's Cole Elementary to thank Nancy Flexer, a retiring teacher, for being awesome: <http://bit.ly/tccyad29>.

Updates

Bonnie Beneke, LCSW, is now a training and curriculum director over CPS-related assessment pre-service and in-service training with the **Department of Children's Services** Office of Learning and Development.

Mental Health America of Middle Tennessee announces **Crystal Henson** as its new program manager.

Earlier this summer, we reported on the state's commitment to fighting prescription drug abuse. The Centers for Disease Control National Center for Injury Prevention and Control announced Tennessee is one of five states selected to receive *Prescription Drug Overdose: Boost for State Prevention Program* funds to innovate and evaluate prevention programs.



About Us. Attorney Christy Sigler, left, was reappointed to serve a second three-year term on the Commission. Sigler, an attorney certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist and a former military intelligence analyst with the U.S. Army, has brought a unique blend of skills to the Commission. She serves as the chair of the Commission's Budget and Data Committee.

Mark Your Calendar

Sept. 4, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Southeast Council on Children and Youth is co-sponsoring "Saving Lives in Tennessee" with the Southeast Regional Suicide Prevention Network. Rashelle Stafford is the guest speaker. Registration: \$15.

Sept. 8, 8:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m., Serving Military Families, Conference Center, 293 Plus Park Blvd, Ste 201, Nashville. Includes CEUs. Limited availability. Contact Mental Health America-MT at www.mhamt.org, (615) 269-5355 or tstarling@mhamt.org.

Sept. 10, 12 noon, Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network Suicide Prevention Awareness Day, Trevecca Community Church, 335 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville. Info www.tspn.org.

Sept. 11, 11:30 a.m., Vanderbilt Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody Lunch and Learn, TBA.

Sept. 11, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network's Middle Tennessee Suicide Prevention Awareness Month event, Centennial Park event shelter, Nashville. Free, including picnic meal, but registration required: spae-mc-14.eventbrite.com.

Sept. 17, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., East Tennessee Council on Children and Youth presents "Keeping More than Dreams Alive," teen suicide awareness event, with Clark Flatt, Jason Foundation, Family Justice Center, 400 Harriet Tubman, Knoxville. Contact Lindsey.Cody@tn.gov or (865) 594-6658.

Sept. 17-19, CWLA National Kinship Care Conference: Building Communities of Care for Children and Families, New Orleans. Contact BuildingKinshipCommunities@cwla.org or register at <http://bit.ly/1ihTWLu>. Early and volume discounts available.

Sept. 21-23, 14th International Conference on Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma, Denver, CO. More info: <http://bit.ly/1eA8VwR>; to register: <http://bit.ly/1puUdOb>.

Sept. 23-24, System of Care Conference: A Common Thread Among Children, Families and Communities, Patterson Park Community Center, Murfreesboro. Save-the-date/event info: <http://bit.ly/1pKNvWI>; registration details to come.

Sept. 25, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., First Responder Training: When the Call Comes, training for responding to cases involving child abuse allegations, Northwest Arkansas Community College, Bentonville, AR. Contact (507) 457-2897 or mdkohner@gundersenhealth.org. Registration fee required. Register at <http://bit.ly/tccyec4>.

Sept. 26, 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Mid-Cumberland Council on Children and Youth is sponsoring "Seeking Justice for All: One Child at a Time," Ed Jones Auditorium, Ellington Agricultural Center, Nashville. Contact Susan.Cope@tn.gov. Register at <http://bit.ly/tccyec3>.

Sept. 30, 10 a.m., Governor's Books from Birth Foundation 10th Anniversary Celebration, Legislative Plaza, Nashville. Information: linda.kirkpatrick@tn.gov or (615) 532-2836.

March 10-11, 2015 Children's Advocacy Days, War Memorial Auditorium, Nashville. Contact Richard.Kennedy@tn.gov.

In the News

"TN children make strides on Kids Count measure," *The (Nashville) Tennessean*: <http://tnne.ws/1A2xM9Z>

"Kids Count shows Tennessee children getting smarter, healthier, but more suffering from poverty," Chattanooga Times Free Press: <http://bit.ly/1wXtCvB>

"Tennessee gets high marks in child welfare report," *Jackson Sun*: <http://bit.ly/tccyfb21>

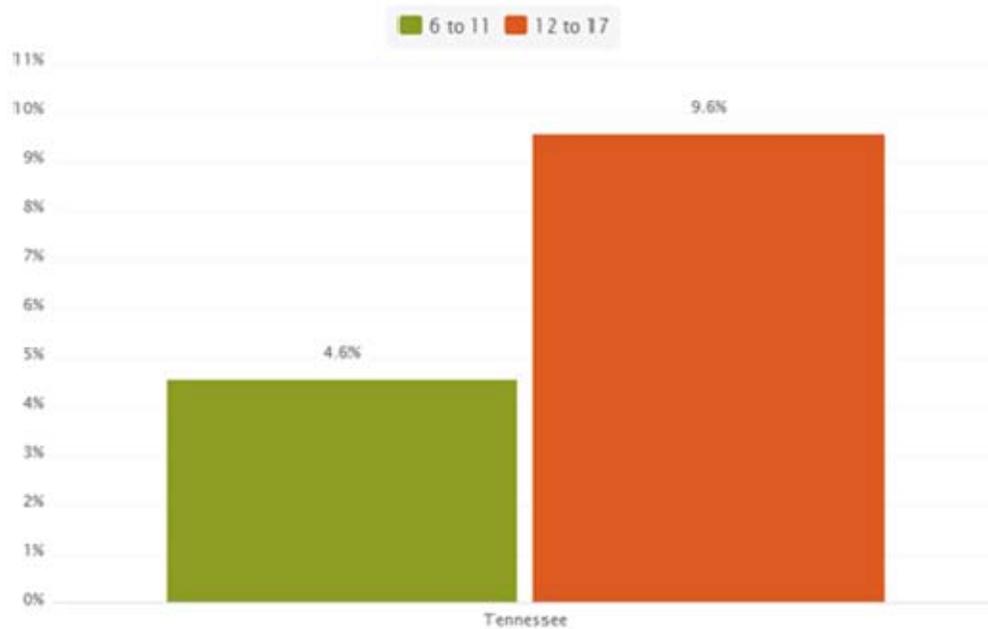
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“ National KIDS COUNT
/ KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
“ A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation
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Research Information

2014's States with the Best and Worst School Systems, <http://bit.ly/tccyfb33>
“School Start Times for Adolescents,” American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://bit.ly/tccyad40>

Tennessee KIDS COUNT Facts

Children Who Missed 11 or More Days of School per Year Due to Health Reasons



CHILDREN WHO MISSED 11 OR MORE DAYS OF SCHOOL PER YEAR DUE TO ILLNESS OR INJURY 2011-2012

National KIDS COUNT
KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

More data on Tennessee child well-being is available at <http://bit.ly/15alkVu>.

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