

## Tennessee

### State Overview

**Population<sup>i</sup>:** 6,770,010

**Urbanization<sup>ii</sup>:** 66.4%

**Student Enrollment<sup>iii</sup>:** 1,021,400

Demographics <sup>iii</sup>		
Demographic	% Student Population	% Teacher Population
Male	51.2	22.0
Female	48.8	78.0
White	63.5	82.3
Black	22.2	13.6
Latinx	9.7	‡
Asian or Pacific Islands	2.0	#
American Indian or Alaska Native	.2	‡
2+ Races	2.5	1.9

Special Populations <sup>iii</sup>	
Population	% Students
Free- and Reduced-Price Lunch	55.0
English Learners	4.3
Special Education	12.9

### Teacher Workforce

**Size of Total Workforce<sup>iv</sup>:** 76,475

2018 Teacher Preparation Statistics <sup>v</sup>	
Total Completers	2,904
Traditional IHE-based Program	79.0%
Alternative IHE-Based Program	17.2%
Alternative Non-IHE-Based Program	3.8%

**Teacher Workforce Reporting:** In 2018 the state released a [report](#) on demographics, reviewing the extent of the diversity of the educator workforce and how many students of color are represented in the state.

Tennessee collects basic data on teacher production by programs and identifies how many completers have high-demand endorsements, but it does not provide programs with guidelines surrounding the number of graduates per subject area.

**Teacher Prep Reporting:** Annual Reports, called the [Educator Preparation Report Card](#), are used as a formal part of the accountability process and support EPP improvement efforts. The Teacher Prep Report Card was previously produced by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), until 2016 when production transferred to the State Board of Education. Annual Reports offer data by clusters of programs (e.g., middle grades, special populations) and for individual programs. The report cards are produced annually for EPPs to provide transparency and inform public stakeholders about the overall performance of Tennessee's EPPs.

In April 2017, Tennessee published a report, [Preparation through Partnership: Strengthening Tennessee's New Teacher Pipeline](#), which describes its areas of greatest teacher demand and illustrates the variation in effectiveness in the state's novice teacher workforce.

**Vacancies:** The Tennessee Department of Education does not publicly provide vacancy information.

## Teacher Preparation Programs

**Recruitment:** Tennessee has a number of recruitment initiatives, with many focused on encouraging high school and college students to enter the teaching profession, as well as funding for LEA-based initiatives.

Programs for high school and college students:

- [TN Teaching Scholars Program](#) designed to encourage HS students to enter EPPs, with the obligation to teach at a PreK-12 in a Tennessee public school one year for each year an award is received. Recipients must be employed as a full-time teacher to be considered for forgiveness.
- The [Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education \(TEACH\) Grant Program](#) provides funding to students who are completing or plan to complete course work needed to begin a career in teaching—while this is a federal program, many EPPs in TN provide support services to encourage students to take advantage of and persist in this program.

Statewide and LEA-based programs:

- LEA-based programs, like Austin Peay University and Montgomery County school system's Early Learning Teacher Residence program, are providing recent high school graduates and CMCSS teacher's aides with an accelerated, free path to become full-time school system teachers in just three years. Many of these programs target minority and first-generation college students. Additionally, [Rutherford County Schools](#) recently became the first [LEA-approved](#) EPP in the state.
- [SB 0936](#) enacts the "Teacher Residency Program Grant Act"; requires the department to establish and administer a program of grants for university teacher preparation programs and LEAs to create teacher residency programs.
- tnSCORE's [Teach Today. Change Tomorrow](#) is a statewide campaign focusing on recruiting millennials to fill the nearly 20,000 anticipated vacancies by 2024. Their goals include increasing teachers of color in the workforce and filling positions in high-needs subjects and schools.

**Certification Requirements:** Certification requirements include the edTPA exam and applicable Praxis subject-specific exams.

**Emergency Certification:** Tennessee does not offer emergency certificates to teachers or districts.

**Teacher Prep Program Approval and Accountability:** Eligible organizations must complete a [two-step approval process](#), which includes proposal submission, followed by a comprehensive review by the State Board within the first five years of operation. Data collection and connection to TN state standards are important components of the approval process. Tennessee conducts comprehensive program reviews every seven years with interim and focused reviews occurring as needed. Annual reporting is required as part of continuous improvement, and multiple measures are reported, including:

- GPA and entry exam scores
- Candidate demographics
- Candidate placement and persistence overall, as well as in high-need settings
- Licensure exam scores
- Completer and employer surveys
- New teacher effectiveness, as measured by evaluation scores and TVASS ratings

**Teacher Prep Program Requirements:** Tennessee EPP entry requirements include a 2.75 GPA and passing scores on the Praxis Core, ACT, or SAT. For admission to post-baccalaureate programs that include job-embedded clinical practice, a degree with a major in the specialty area or qualifying scores on the applicable content assessment are required. Candidates must complete a program that aligns to [literacy standards](#) for EPPs, which in turn is aligned to classroom standards. Candidates must also complete a [clinical experience](#) in the appropriate licensure and endorsement area, spanning either one student teaching semester (15 weeks) or a full school year internship (100 school days). The experience must include direct teaching activities under the guidance of a mentor teacher.

## Policy Landscape

**Governance:** The Department of Education is led by the [Commissioner of Education](#). The Commissioner of Education is appointed by the [governor](#). Penny Schwinn was appointed to the position in 2019. The [Tennessee State Board of Education](#) is the governing body of the state's public education system. The board is composed of nine members (one from each of the state's congressional districts plus a student member). Members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the [Tennessee General Assembly](#). All members serve five-year terms, with the exception of the student member, who serves a one-year term.

**Union Presence:** The [state requires collective conferencing](#). Unions are not allowed to automatically collect dues from non-members, and teachers are not allowed to strike. Payroll deductions for union dues are removed if that money is to be used for political purposes. 58.7% of teachers are part of a teacher's union.

**Recent Policy Changes:** Under a law that [narrowly passed](#) in 2019, with the support of Republican Gov. Bill Lee, all students with Education Savings Accounts must take state tests each year in math and English language arts in order to track student performance in the program. But the law was not clear about whether national test results could also be taken into account to decide whether a participating school is helping students with ESAs show academic progress.

[SB 0936](#) created the "Teacher Residency Program Grant Act" requiring the department to establish and administer a program of grants for university teacher preparation programs and LEAs to create teacher residency programs. The TN State Board of Education is currently exploring [changes to licensure reciprocity](#) to make it simpler and more efficient for teachers from out of state to transfer their license to TN.

## Trends

**Size and composition:** Tennessee is a comparatively rural state with 1 teacher for about every 13 students. There is great variation in district size across the state—there are a number of large urban, mid-sized suburban/rural, and very small rural districts. Tennessee is a moderately diverse state with a very racially homogenous (white) teacher workforce. In recent years, the state overhauled reporting and accountability requirements for EPPs, and have seen

growth in the effectiveness of EPPs generally as a result—but have seen declines in candidate enrollment and completion over the last few years. The number of traditional as well as alternative, non IHE-based certification programs have decreased drastically since 2014, while IHE-based alternative certification programs have remained fairly constant.

**Shortages and mismatches:** The state anticipates that nearly half of all TN teachers will retire in the next decade, concurrently as the state population continues to grow (especially in inner city schools). Metro Nashville Public Schools still had 170 unfilled vacancies three weeks into the school year, mainly in STEM and Special Education at the high school level. Teachers in TN are also paid less than the US average, which could be a contributing factor to leaving the profession.

**Current Focuses and Challenges:** [Teacher retention and new teacher recruitment](#)—as the state anticipates nearly half of all teachers retiring in the next decade, this feels especially urgent. Metro Nashville Public Schools opened with many vacancies in critical shortage areas, which is a consistent theme across the state. The Governor is focusing on increasing teacher pay, while LEAs are developing partnerships to accelerate certification pathways for substitutes, teacher aides, and candidates interested in teaching immediately. Additionally, [teacher tenure requirements](#) have grown more stringent in the last decade, requiring teachers to have five years of experience and strong evaluation scores to earn tenure.

Teacher diversity is also part of the conversation, with state stakeholders acknowledging that they need to increase the proportion of teachers of color to more closely align with student populations. While it is a metric that is scored on the Teacher Prep Report Card, and the state has given Diversity Innovation Grants (DIG), many stakeholders believe that there needs to be additional initiatives and goals in place to further support diversification of the teacher workforce.

Reporting and accountability for all aspects of teaching (prep programs, student growth, evaluations) has been a focus over the last decade and contributed to improvement in a number of metrics.

Rural education is increasingly part of the conversation. [The TN Educational Equity Coalition](#) recommends the state revise its education funding formula to take rural needs into account by providing each school with a flat rate, then distributing extra money based on the number of students who are from low-income families, struggle with a disability, are learning to speak English, or attend rural schools. That recommendation comes as the state is being sued by its two largest districts — in Memphis and Nashville — over the adequacy of their funding because of the needs of urban students. The coalition also wants more districts to adopt student-based budgeting, which distributes funds to schools according to student characteristics and needs. In addition, it wants the state to provide financial incentives to get more teachers into schools that are experiencing shortages due either to geography or content. The recommendations follow a six-month Tennessee study based on state and federal data and tours of rural areas to interview teachers, principals, and district staff.

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<sup>i</sup> *United States Census Quick Facts*. (2018). Retrieved October 2019, from Census.gov: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

<sup>ii</sup> Iowa State University. (2010). *Urban Percentage of the Population for States*, Historical. Retrieved from Iowa Community Indicators Program: <https://www.icip.iastate.edu/tables/population/urban-pct-states>

<sup>iii</sup> Institute of Education Sciences. (2018). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2018menu\\_tables.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2018menu_tables.asp)

<sup>iv</sup> Institute of Education Sciences. (2012). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_209.30.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.30.asp)

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *2018 Title II Reports*. Retrieved from Title II: <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx>

