

TennesseeCAN 2018 Legislative Summary



TennesseeCAN empowers parents, community members and policymakers to advocate for improved K–12 education policies that put Tennessee children first. We believe students succeed when they are taught by well-supported, effective educators, and that all students deserve equitable access to a high-quality education.

Our organization’s 2018 Legislative Agenda was largely successful, and the passage of four notable bills will increase equitable access to crucial funds needed to close achievement gaps. Below is a summary of our top priority legislative items considered during the year and the final outcome of those bills.

Top Highlights:

- **HB 1870/SB 1901 Passed**
Special Education Funding—TennesseeCAN supported passage of this legislation which expanded access to High Cost Special Education Reimbursements. This bill ensures that all schools serving high-needs special education students, including those attending public charter schools, can receive these crucial reimbursement funds. The bill also allows for district and public charter schools to collaborate for purposes of providing special education services.
- **HR 0192/SR 0158 Passed**
Education Funding—TennesseeCAN supported this legislation which codified increased funding for school districts to be used for the Response-to-Intervention program (RTI²). The resolution adds a new component to the instructional category of the Basic Education Funding Formula (BEP). Districts will now have dedicated funding to hire RTI² coordinators.
- **HB 2644/SB 2552 Passed**
Governor’s Budget—Governor Haslam’s final budget made more critical investments in education in our state, including \$212 million for K–12 education. Highlights of education investments include: \$55 million in teacher compensation increases; \$13.3 million in annual funding for RTI² coordinators; a second year of \$6 million for charter school facilities grants; \$10 million in school turnaround grants for priority schools; an additional \$4.5 million for the Read to be Ready early literacy initiative; and, for the first time ever, \$1.75 million to strengthen the state’s principal pipeline.
- **HB 2549/SB 1765 Passed**
Public Charter Schools—This legislation expands public charter schools’ access to facility funding. The bill allows the energy efficient schools council to award grants or loans for energy efficient capital outlay projects to public charter schools, including those in the Achievement School District, whereas previously grants and loans could only be awarded to school districts.



Win



Win



Win



Win

- **HB 1863/SB 1843 Taken Off Notice**

Equitable Access—TennesseeCAN supported this bill which would require the Tennessee Department of Education to annually report the number of students placed in ineffective classrooms for two consecutive years, and create greater transparency on equitable access to highly effective educators statewide. However, TennesseeCAN has secured a commitment to accomplish this through non-legislative actions, working with the legislative sponsors.



Ongoing

- **HB 1463/SB 1605 Taken Off Notice**

Public Charter Schools—A key component of the 2017 High-Quality Charter Schools Act, which was a top legislative priority for TennesseeCAN, required that school districts share basic student directory information with public charter schools located in their district. TennesseeCAN opposed this bill which sought to significantly water down that requirement and create unnecessary burdens that would limit parent access to information about all public school options available to their children.



Win

- **HB 1609/SB 2575 Failed in House Instruction and Programs Subcommittee**

Assessments and Accountability—TennesseeCAN opposed passage of this bill, which would have prohibited the administration of end-of-course examinations to students in grades 9 through 12 and established the ACT as the only assessment required for graduation—thereby eliminating state secondary assessments tied to state standards and leaving educators and the public with very little insight into student growth and performance in high school.



Win

Additional Legislative Highlights:

In addition to our top-tier priorities listed above, there were several pieces of legislation that are relevant to our core policy priorities: *Aim Higher*, *Reach Everyone*, *Expand Choices*, *Cultivate Talent*, and *Start Earlier*. Below is a list of additional bills that we tracked and engaged on throughout the 2018 legislative session.

Aim Higher

Establishing high academic standards for students and rigorous assessments that inform a transparent and robust accountability system.

- **HB 1981/SB 1623 Passed**

Assessments and Accountability—Prompted by difficulties in the administration of TNReady, this legislation is intended to hold students, teachers, and schools harmless for the 2017–18 TNReady results. As amended, it allows districts to choose whether this year’s assessment will be worth 0–15% of a student’s final grade; prohibits any termination or compensation actions based on 2017–18 results; and prohibits 2017–18 results from being used to assign letter grades to a school.

- **HB 0075/SB 0578 *Passed***
Assessments and Accountability—A direct follow-up to HB1981/SB1623, this legislation established further hold harmless provisions to the 2017–18 TNReady results. The bill states that no adverse action may be taken against any student, teacher, school, or district based on the 2017–18 TNReady results. The bill also further clarifies that “adverse action” includes a school being placed in the Achievement School District based on the 2017–18 results.
- **HB 2238/SB 1498 *Taken Off Notice***
Assessments and Accountability—This bill would have required TNReady to be administered free of any “major problems” for one year in order to be used for student growth data in teacher evaluations. The bill did not specify what constitutes a major problem.
- **HB 2003/SB 2587 *Deferred to Summer Study in House***
Teacher Evaluations—Several amendments were prepared for this bill that would have allowed some teachers to be held harmless from TVAAS student growth results. Some of the amendments proposed included holding harmless teachers who taught in priority schools or had received a 4 or 5 evaluation score in past school years.
- **HB 2203/SB 2589 *Taken Off Notice***
Assessments—This bill would have specified exactly what assessments would be required in grades 3–11 and would have reduced the number of required assessments in middle and high school. Further, it would’ve replaced many of the high school end-of-course examinations with the ACT, reducing available secondary performance data aligned with state standards.

Reach Everyone

Improving educational outcomes and opportunities for all students, especially those who are at-risk and historically underserved.

- **HB 2088/SB 2429 *Failed in House Administration & Planning Subcommittee***
School Turnaround—This bill would have effectively abolished the Achievement School District (ASD) by not allowing the ASD to establish any new schools and requiring all current ASD schools to be returned to their home district at the expiration of the current charter contract. As detailed in Tennessee’s ESSA Plan, the ASD is the state’s most rigorous intervention for chronically low-performing schools.
- **HB 1460/SB 1626 *Passed***
Student Supports—This legislation allows school districts to establish “Recovery High Schools” for students to attend who are recovering from a substance addiction. These schools would still award regular diplomas to their graduates.
- **HB 1599/SB 1649 *Passed***
Early Postsecondary—This legislation expands work-based learning opportunities for high school students, and establishes liability frameworks and tax credits for participating companies.

Expand Choices

Providing access to high-quality educational choices for all Tennessee students and families.

- **HB 2525/SB 2399 *Taken Off Notice***
Public Charter Schools—This bill would have completely removed the requirement for districts to share basic student directory information with public charter schools operating within the district. This would have severely limited parent access to information about all public school options available to their children, rather than providing them with information needed to select the best public school option for their child.
- **HB 2425/SB 2606 *Never Calendared***
Public Charter Schools—This bill would have added needed accountability for charter school authorizers. The bill specified that if a district failed to timely provide student information requested by a public charter school or chartering authority, then the department could withhold that district's future charter school authorizing fees. This issue will likely be revisited during the 2019 legislative session.
- **HB 1880/SB 2327 *Taken Off Notice***
Public Charter Schools—This bill sought to balance the need to close chronically underperforming public charter schools with allowing ample time for these schools to demonstrate improved performance. Under current law, if a public charter school lands on the state's Priority Schools List, then it is automatically closed at the end of the school year. This legislation would have required a public charter school to have at least 3 years of performance data in order to face automatic closure.
- **HB 1888/SB 2158 *Passed***
Public Charter Schools—This legislation requires annual financial audits of charter management organizations (CMOs) that operate public charter schools in Tennessee. Previous law already required annual financial audits of public charter schools, but not CMOs that managed them.
- **HB 2335/SB 2453 *Taken Off Notice***
Public Charter Schools—This bill dealt with financial transparency for public charter schools, holding them to the same financial transparency requirements as traditional district schools. However, all of the bill's provisions were either already covered in current law, or required elements above and beyond those required of district schools.
- **HB 2474/SB 2610 *Taken Off Notice***
Private School Choice—As amended, this bill would have expanded eligibility into the Individualized Education Account program (IEA) to include special education students with dyslexia and students with multiple disability categories.

Cultivate Talent

Developing, supporting and empowering effective teachers.

- **HB 1549/SB 1804 Passed**

Educator Quality—This legislation helps improve licensure reciprocity for proven, high-quality out-of-state educators. The legislation exempts out-of-state educators from having to take an assessment to obtain a full professional teaching license if they: possessed an active professional license from a state that has a reciprocal agreement with Tennessee; are employed to teach in courses for which they are properly endorsed; and received an overall evaluation of a 4 or a 5 in each of the immediate preceding two years.

- **HB 0067/SB 0250 Passed**

Teacher Evaluations—This legislation requires the development and use of alternative growth measures for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, allowing these teachers to receive an individualized growth score for their evaluation rather than the school-wide growth score.

- **HB 1694/SB 1629 Passed**

Educator Quality—This legislation establishes accountability measures for teacher preparation programs that produce educators who underperform in the first few years of teaching. As amended, the legislation requires teacher preparation programs to report the number of underperforming program completers and estimate the cost to the program in order to provide remediation to these teachers.

Start Earlier

Providing high-quality early educational opportunities for all students.

- **HB 2060/SB 2571 Passed**

Parental Engagement—As amended, this legislation establishes parent engagement pilot programs in at least 2 schools in the state. Schools will apply for grant funds and the Department of Education will measure various metrics geared toward increasing parental involvement in school and increased student achievement.