



TENNESSEE

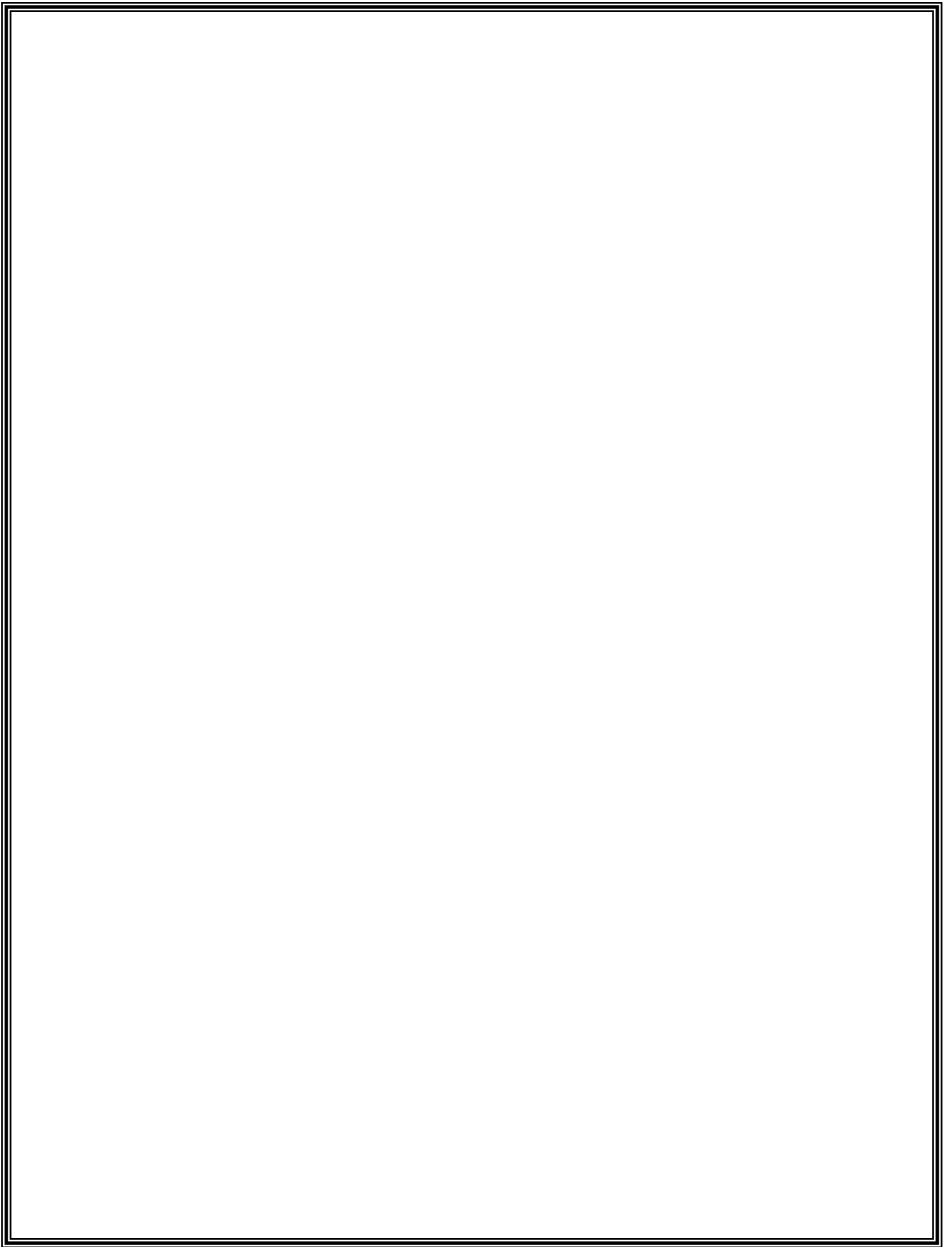
TEACHING

QUALITY

INITIATIVE



An Action Agenda for Change



This report was prepared in collaboration with the following partners:

Tennessee State Board of Education
Tennessee State Department of Education
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Tennessee Business Roundtable
Tennessee Board of Regents
University of Tennessee
Tennessee Independent Universities and Colleges
Association
Tennessee Education Association
Tennessee General Assembly
Tennessee Association of School Administrators
Tennessee Association of Elementary and Middle School
Principals
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Introduction

Teacher supply and teaching quality in Tennessee have reached a crisis point, particularly in science and mathematics. We just do not have enough highly-qualified teachers to educate our children. Tennessee's best and brightest students typically choose careers other than education, and our best young teachers often leave the classroom within their first five years. Although our experienced teacher core has been a mainstay of Tennessee public education, accelerating retirements among this group likely will worsen our dilemma. We must deal with the Tennessee teacher issue soon.

This report recommends five areas of focus to address teaching quality issues in Tennessee. Although teaching quality is generally perceived to be the responsibility of programs of teacher education, this report views teaching quality as an institution-wide issue in general and program specific to teacher education. The five areas of focus identified in this report address both program-specific needs and imperative institutional commitments necessary to improve teaching quality throughout Tennessee institutions of higher education. For each key area, there is a performance goal that states what we believe to be the desired state when the focus area has been achieved. In addition, a brief rationale for selecting the areas of focus, research base, strategies for implementation and proposed action items to begin working toward the performance goals are provided.

The report reflects the work of 18 months by both a Task Force charged with the identification of key focal areas and a set of implementation teams representing all stakeholders in education across the State of Tennessee. The work began in May 2006, followed by numerous meetings around each of the focus areas to develop and fine-tune a set of recommended strategies to achieve the goals of the focal areas.

Responsibility for teaching quality is dispersed across multiple sectors: higher education, schools, communities, and state education agencies. Until teaching quality is addressed in teacher education programs, colleges across campuses that teach the disciplines, in state assessment and credentialing activities, and in policy, students will be the losers in a battle to educate more Tennesseans for a workforce functioning in a global environment.



**The Vision: *Increased Student Learning
Through Improved Teaching Quality***



Areas of Focus for Change

KNOWLEDGE BASE (content/pedagogy)

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY TEACHERS

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING

MODELING

MENTORING



Areas of Focus for Change

Focal Area One: KNOWLEDGE BASE (content/pedagogy)

All teacher education programs should be developed around and held accountable to a common set of core performance outcomes. Thus, this performance goal addresses the desire to create an assessment system for teacher education licensure at institutions that without question provides artifacts and evidence of applying a required core set of skills and knowledge prior to a recommendation for licensure.

Research on performance outcomes for teacher candidates is beginning to coalesce around at least two dimensions. The most well-researched of these is teacher content knowledge or expertise. Although less clear from the teacher quality research literature, pedagogical skills have received some support as an important variable in teaching quality. Taken together, these variables may explain a considerable portion of the variance associated with student achievement in the classroom. However, sound, standards-based assessment of these characteristics needs to be developed, implemented, and evaluated to ensure that all teachers reach some threshold of quality in teaching. Given the variability of teacher education requirements across preparation programs and licensure programs, perhaps the most effective and efficient way to ensure teacher quality in these areas is to require a standard assessment procedure of all teacher candidates.

Performance Goal

All teacher education programs have a common set of core performance outcomes and measures appropriate for teacher licensure and entry into the teaching profession.

Each teacher:

- ◇ *Possesses content expertise*
- ◇ *Manages the classroom effectively*
- ◇ *Uses data to diagnose, assess and prescribe strategies to improve student performance*
- ◇ *Delivers differentiated instruction to all students*
- ◇ *Recognizes and corrects reading deficiencies*
- ◇ *Practices reflective teaching*

ACTION STEPS

- Align requirements for competencies, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills with existing State of Tennessee evaluation and professional growth frameworks.
- Develop a competency-based strategy for credentialing in the state. All teacher candidates should be required to provide evidence of competencies, skills, and content knowledge to obtain initial licensure. Provision of evidence of competencies will result in licensure, regardless of previous coursework or experiences. Inputs such as completed courses, practica, and experiences etc. are insufficient evidence of competence



in the absence of outcome indicators such as demonstrations, portfolios, performance assessments, simulations, etc.

- Collaborate with national accreditation and certification organizations, which have expertise in collection and evaluation of accountability data, to address evidence of competencies, including validity, reliability, representativeness, and fairness.
- Establish responsibility for evaluation of evidence of competencies with teacher preparation programs in the state in cases of both regular licensure and alternative licensure. Every candidate for licensure in the state

should be required to present evidence of competencies to one of these programs.

- Develop and maintain an organizational structure to address evidence, competencies, and licensure related to Tennessee teachers. The responsibilities of this organization are two: (a) training of all teacher preparation programs in evaluating evidence of competencies; and (b) monitoring reliability of evaluation of evidence of competencies. The organization should have strong representation from business, public schools, institutions of higher education, and technical experts.



Focal Area Two: CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY TEACHERS

Research supports that particular personal characteristics of teachers are related to their overall effectiveness. Therefore, personal characteristics of prospective teachers must be considered carefully at the entry points to teacher education programs. Thus, the selection process for admission to teacher education programs must use state of the art approaches and tools to assist in addressing personal characteristics at the entry point. In addition, teacher education programs must be designed to address the personal development of students as an integral part of the preparation programs to become professional teachers.

Teacher characteristics beyond content knowledge and pedagogical skills have been shown to be important predictors of student achievement. Whereas the most consistent finding related to additional teacher characteristics is verbal skills, some research support has accrued for the role of teacher caring. The role of dispositional factors, including teacher attitudes and values, likely is very important as well. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has emphasized the importance of these variables in their requirements for accreditation of teacher education programs. Because identification and assessment procedures associated with dispositions remain relatively undeveloped, standards and applications need to be devised and evaluated to guide teacher preparation programs.

Performance Goal

The teacher selection process recognizes that the quality teacher values relationships and strives to form connections with colleagues as well as students, their families and communities, recognizing and appreciating diversity. The quality teacher is caring, reflective, and receptive to change and is a good communicator.

Each teacher:

- ◇ *Demonstrates caring attitude*
- ◇ *Communicates effectively*
- ◇ *Recognizes and promotes diversity*
- ◇ *Accepts change*
- ◇ *Displays evidence of professional demeanor*

ACTION STEPS

- Identify strategic points in the teacher education programs to screen students for appropriate dispositions:
 - ◇ Devise strategies for self-screening early in the teacher education through realistic preview of the profession.
 - ◇ Perform initial screening at entry point into the teacher education program.
 - ◇ Perform final screening prior to assignment in student teaching.
- Validate core characteristics and screening process for refinement/revision as needed as a part of an ongoing evaluation.



Focal Area Three: PROFESSIONALIZING TEACHING

Learning to teach is a developmental process that doesn't end with initial licensure. As with other professions, discrete developmental stages occur throughout a career. Teaching has tended to not acknowledge these stages and thus the appropriate support, professional growth opportunities, and recognitions are not built into the system. Teaching Quality will be enhanced if as institutions of higher education we 1) work to advocate for a state-wide system of professional teaching, and 2) develop and model a system within institutions of higher education.

Professionalization of teaching typically has encompassed developmental and experiential acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and values, standards for which are set by the profession itself. These important teacher characteristics often are



associated with self-exploration, self-direction, and self-monitoring within a differentiated, inductive environment.

Creating a statewide system to implement professional standards and to develop such environments in schools also should improve school climate and promote student learning, and should increase retention of quality teachers.

Performance Goal

- *An environment exists for Tennessee educators that acknowledges and supports the development of expertise, offers pathways for advancement, rewards accomplishment, and **ensures/demands** professional behavior.*
- *Teachers are lifelong learners who stay current with and implement the latest research-based instructional strategies, content knowledge, and technology.*

ACTION STEPS

- Adopt the Career Life Cycle Model (adapted from *Kappa Delta Pi* Teacher Life Cycle Model) to advance a system to recognize and suggest professional stages in teaching.
- Develop the peer review process for the model which must include: well-trained assessors operating within a well-defined and explicit set of rubrics; a process that is transparent to all; a due process component; nonbiased with "blind, peer review;" providing teacher with the opportunity to submit documents outlining the particular educational/school context in which the teacher is teaching; in-depth and detailed indicators/rubric (on a website); result in significant monetary increase; and be seen by teachers as fair in every way.
- Seek significant funding for a minimum of \$10,000 raise in salary or bonus with advancement to the next stage in the model.



Focal Area Four: MODELING

All students in institutions of higher education deserve to be taught by faculty members who use research-based best teaching practices for learning. Thus, the aspiration for all faculty to model best practices in their teaching is viewed as not only essential to ensure the highest levels of teaching quality across all disciplines but also as a foundational component for the students intending to become teachers themselves. New teachers tend to employ the teaching styles used by those who taught them. It is important, therefore, to ensure that faculty members who instruct pre-service teachers employ research-based teaching in their classrooms and clinical settings.

Modeling of research-based practices and quality instruction may represent our most effective means of transferring this knowledge and these skills and attitudes to pre-service teaching candidates. Modeling of teaching strategies has resulted in significant changes in instructional practices of pre-service science teachers, including changes in attitudes and use of technology. Changes in other important teaching practices and attitudes, including those related to inclusion, diversity, and individualization, also are amenable to modeling by instructors. However, environmental barriers such as lack of instructional time and administrative support may mitigate these changes and may need to be addressed to ensure transfer of practices to the school setting.

Performance Goal

*Content, pedagogical, and clinical faculty **model** evidence-based teaching practices appropriate to their disciplines.*



ACTION STEPS

- Base Teaching Quality efforts on evidence-based teaching practices.
- Establish Teaching Quality Seminars on each higher education institution campus.
- Combine ongoing campus efforts with TQ Seminars.
- Require faculty (higher education) job searches to include “commitment to evidence-based teaching practices.”
- Require every tenure and promotion dossier to include evidence of professional development in evidence-based teaching.
- Place student teachers only with those clinical/cooperating teachers in K-12 who have demonstrated evidence-based teaching.
- Fund TQ Seminars.



Focal Area Five: MENTORING

In keeping with standards of practice relative to existing professions, teaching quality will be enhanced through a planned and systemic program of induction into the teaching profession that includes a robust program of mentoring that begins early in their preparation programs and continues through their early years of teaching.



Induction and mentoring for beginning teachers have been shown to have multiple benefits for both teachers and the systems in which they work. Retention of quality teachers is more likely in schools that have effective mentoring programs. Teachers participating in such programs develop more extensive repertoires of teaching strategies and exhibit greater job satisfaction. Additionally, teachers in such programs are better able to handle discipline problems and show lower levels of stress. Some evidence also exists that teacher mentoring is associated with higher student achievement and more positive

school climate. Given the apparent powerful benefits of mentoring on teachers, students, and schools, a seamless system of mentoring and induction that encompasses both pre-service and in-service settings likely will produce significant benefits for the state.

Performance Goal

All educators will receive a planned program of induction into the profession beginning with their pre-service experiences and receive quality mentoring beginning early in the preparation programs and extending through the early years of teaching.

All institutions provide mentoring development instruction for P-16 systems.

ACTION STEPS

- Ensure seamless transitions from pre-service to practice.
- Institutionalize evidence-based induction and practice.
- Practice collaboration, communication, and collegiality.
- Encourage self-reflection.
- Maintain partnership between K-12 and higher education institutions.



A Call to Action

In this time of unprecedented need for competent, caring teachers and a structure to support them, a historic coming-together of Tennessee stakeholders has developed a map to meet the need. The map will assure that all Tennessee teachers demonstrate acceptable levels of knowledge, competence, and personal characteristics to educate our children. It will ensure that programs of teacher education are accountable for their graduates and that these programs will work closely with and be responsive to schools, parents, and communities. The plan will keep teachers in classrooms by developing schools as effective and pleasant places to practice, and by promoting teaching as an honorable and desirable profession.

To be successful, the Tennessee TQI plan requires a continuation and amplification of the historic collaboration that resulted in its development. It requires a commitment from educators, schools, universities, agencies, and decision makers to assemble the resources to move the plan forward. Perhaps most of all, it requires a bold and shared vision for changing teaching and learning in Tennessee. With this plan, we believe that Tennessee has a tremendous opportunity to improve its schools, its colleges, its teaching, and its learning.



“There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”

- President John F. Kennedy



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