

# TENNESSEE: STATE STRATEGY BRIEF

## Ed Trust-Midwest fact sheet about lessons from leading education states

**B**y no means has Tennessee yet reached the heights of a national education leader like Massachusetts. But its recent and dramatic improvement signals the beginning of a turnaround for the state. Ten years ago, Tennessee ranked well below Michigan in fourth-grade math. In 2013,

Tennessee ranked 37th compared to Michigan's 42nd. Today it is leading the nation for the highest student improvement in some key subjects. Tennessee's strategies are similar to Massachusetts' early efforts to improve its teaching and learning. For more information, please see ETM's 2014 State of Michigan Education report.

### Education Numbers at a Glance, 2013-2014

	Tennessee	Michigan
Total number of students in public schools (K-12 traditional public and charter)	967,173 <sup>i</sup>	1,519,065 <sup>ii</sup>
Estimated number of charter school students	15,533 (1.6% of student population) <sup>iii</sup>	141,204 (9.3% of student population) <sup>iv</sup>
Total number of public schools (K-12 traditional public and charter)	1,763 <sup>v</sup>	3,392 <sup>vi</sup>
Estimated number of charter schools	71 <sup>vii</sup>	370 <sup>viii</sup>
Percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch	58.6% <sup>ix</sup>	47.89% <sup>x</sup>
Demographic makeup of public schools	African American: 24.1%, Asian: 1.9% Hispanic: 7.3%, Native American: 0.3% White: 66.3% <sup>xi</sup>	African American: 18.25%, Asian: 2.92% Hispanic: 6.36%, Native American: 0.75% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander: 0.10% Multi-Race: 2.56%, White: 69.07% <sup>xii</sup>
Per Pupil Spending PreK-12, FY2012 <sup>xiii</sup>	\$8,294	\$10,855
Current Spending PreK-12 <sup>xiv</sup> , and Percentage Breakdown from Sources, FY2012 <sup>xv</sup>	\$8.36 billion Federal: 14.1%; State: 44.9%; Local: 41.0%	\$15.74 billion Federal: 10.6%; State: 55.4%; Local: 34%
Estimated Avg. Salaries of Classroom Teachers, 2013-14 <sup>xvi</sup>	\$48,049 (42nd nationwide)	\$61,866 (10th nationwide)

## TENNESSEE – STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Ask Tennessee leaders what they have done to turn around the state, and its leaders attribute the progress to:

- Strong state leadership;
- A research-based, comprehensive statewide reform effort with a focus on improving teaching quality.
- Sustained investment in implementation through multiple years;
- Input from educators, particularly from the field.
- Alignment between key stakeholders, from educators to student advocacy groups and the business community.

- The state also engaged higher education institutions to create a statewide master plan aimed at increasing educational attainment for all Tennessee residents. The plan addressed workforce & economic development needs, increased college attainment and access. It also promoted higher education collaboration across institutions.<sup>xx</sup>
- The Tennessee Stem Innovation Network worked to improve STEM education.<sup>xxi</sup>

### EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Tennessee has put a laser-like focus on effective teaching and school leadership. In particular, it has made educator evaluation and improvement a major priority.

- The state created an educator evaluation system.<sup>xvii</sup> All teachers are evaluated based on classroom observations and student learning data. Tennessee has trained 5,000 evaluators in the system.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Tennessee developed one of the nation's first value-added data systems. Data are released to educators to help educators analyze the results and use the information to inform their instruction and target professional development.
- Tennessee also established smart policies, including: kept individual evaluation results private, required multiple observations of classroom practice, and surveyed tens of thousands of educators on how implementation of the new system was going.

### CAREER- AND COLLEGE-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL K-16 STUDENTS

Tennessee state leaders have taken numerous steps to raise academic standards for all students in all grades and to ensure that state assessments are aligned to those standards.

- Tennessee adopted the Common Core State Standards and stronger graduation requirements, including additional math credits and capstone projects determined by local school boards.
- Tennessee phased in the Common Core standards over multiple years, starting with math in grades 3-8 and a pilot of English standards in 60 school districts. The state invested \$15 million to train teachers and develop content aligned to the standards.<sup>xix</sup>

### SUPPORT FOR ALL TEACHERS

Both accountability and support are central to the state's strategy on effective teaching.

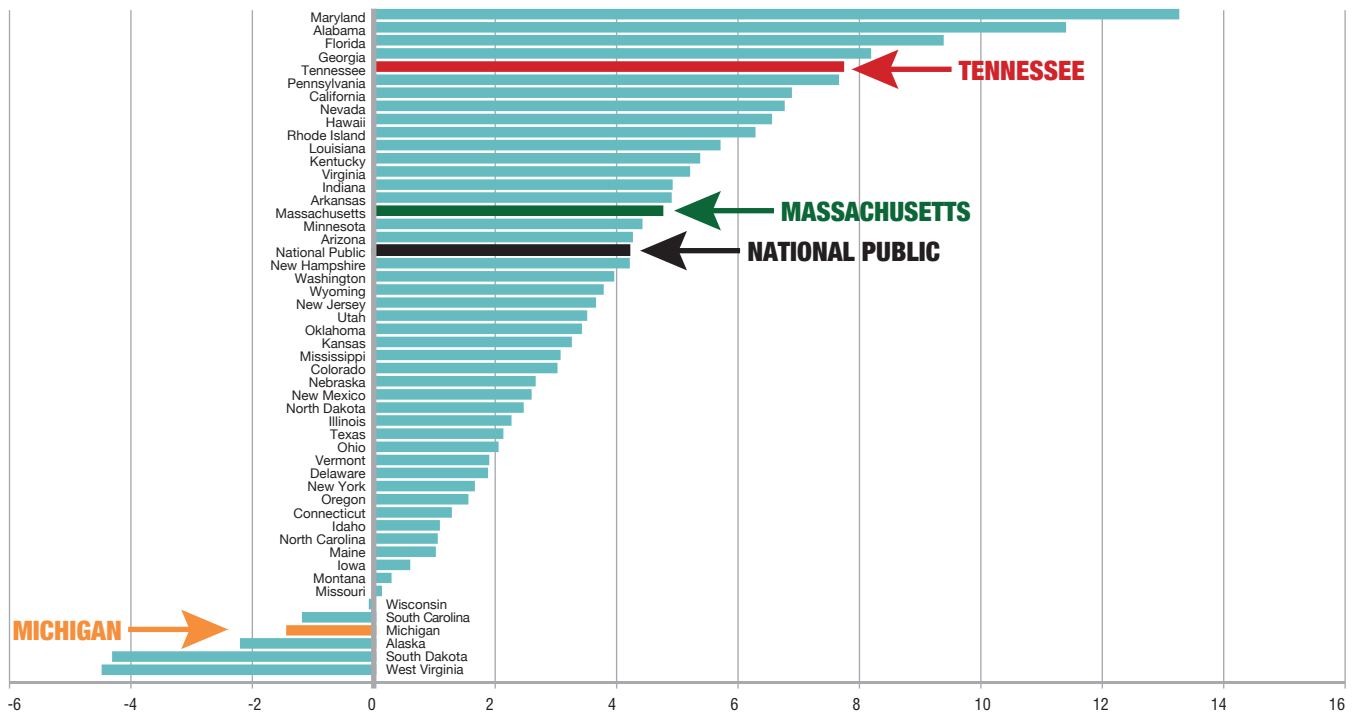
- Instead of leaving training on new standards to local districts, Tennessee spearheaded state-led efforts to ensure that teachers understood the instructional shifts required of career- and college-ready standards. The state identified more than 700 teachers with strong learning gains and trained them to be Common Core coaches who work with teachers across the state. More than 70,000 educators have received training.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Tennessee was a leader in building data systems to track and inform teaching and learning. A pilot early warning data system has enabled educators to see real-time indicators of at-risk student progress.
- The state also developed a Pre-K through higher education (P-20) longitudinal student data system.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### CHARTER SCHOOL LANDSCAPE

- In Tennessee, where less than 2 percent of students are enrolled in charter schools, local school boards and the achievement school district may authorize charter schools. The authorizing power of the achievement school district can be revoked by the legislature and governor. The state board of education may authorize charter school applications sponsored by local school boards.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- For-profit school operators have been outlawed in Tennessee.<sup>xxv</sup>
- An interim review of a charter school must be conducted by its authorizer in the fifth year of a charter school's initial period of operation and also in the fifth year following any renewal (10 year total contract agreement). Guidelines require progress in achieving goals and pupil performance standards.<sup>xxvi</sup>

## TEN YEAR GROWTH IN READING SCORES BY STATE

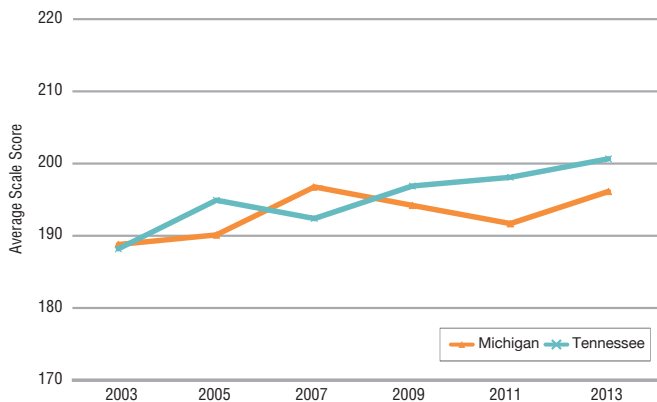
Average Scale Score Change, NAEP Grade 4 – Reading – All Students (2003-13)



Note: Basic Scale Score = 208; Proficient Scale Score = 238  
Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES

### TENNESSEE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS OUTPACE MICHIGAN OVER LAST DECADE

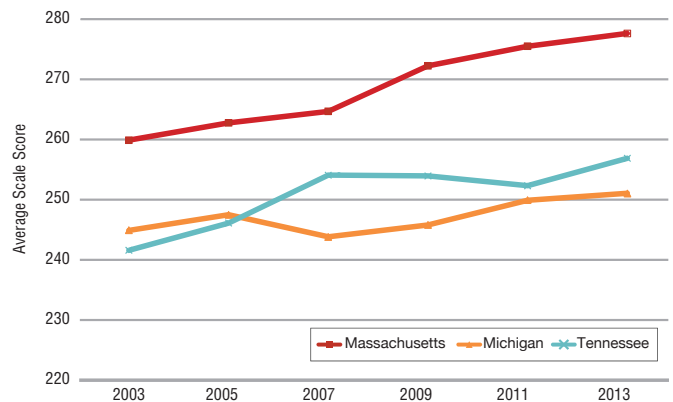
NAEP Grade 4 – Reading – African American



Note: Basic Scale Score = 208; Proficient Scale Score = 238  
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, State Comparisons Tool

### AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IMPROVING IN MATH IN LEADING STATES

NAEP Grade 8 – Math – African American



Note: Basic Scale Score = 262; Proficient Scale Score = 299  
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, State Comparisons Tool

## ENDNOTES

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- ii Center for Educational Performance and Information, Spring 2013 Michigan Enrollment data. [http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-21423\\_30451---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-21423_30451---,00.html)
- iii National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Model Law Rankings – Tennessee. <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/TN/>
- iv National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Model Law Rankings – Michigan. <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/MI/>
- v Tennessee Department of Education, 2013 Report Card. <http://www.tn.gov/education/reportcard/2013.shtml>
- vi Michigan Department of Education, CEPI Educational Entity Master open-active as of March 26, 2014. <https://cepi.state.mi.us/eem/PublicDatasets.aspx>
- vii National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Model Law Rankings – Tennessee. <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/TN/>
- viii Michigan Department of Education, CEPI Educational Entity Master open-active as of March 26, 2014. <https://cepi.state.mi.us/eem/PublicDatasets.aspx>
- ix Tennessee Department of Education, 2013 Report Card. <http://www.tn.gov/education/reportcard/2013.shtml>
- x MI School Data, 2012-2013. <https://www.mischooldata.org>
- xi Tennessee Department of Education, 2013 Report Card. <http://www.tn.gov/education/reportcard/2013.shtml>
- xii Center for Educational Performance and Information, Spring 2013 Michigan Enrollment data. [http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-21423\\_30451---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-21423_30451---,00.html)
- xiii United States Census Bureau, "Public Education Finances 2012." May 2014. <http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/12f33pub.pdf>
- xiv United States Census Bureau, "Public Education Finances 2012." May 2014. <http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/12f33pub.pdf>
- xv United States Census Bureau, "Public Education Finances 2012." May 2014. <http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/12f33pub.pdf>
- xvi National Education Association, "Rankings and Estimates." March 2014. <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA-Rankings-and-Estimates-2013-2014.pdf>
- xvii SCORE, "The State of Education in Tennessee 2012-13." 2013. <http://www.joomag.com/magazine/2012-scoreannual-report/0315827001387403103>
- xviii Tennessee Department of Education, "Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year 1 Implementation." July 2012. [http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/yr\\_1\\_tchr\\_eval\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/yr_1_tchr_eval_rpt.pdf)
- xix SCORE, "Tennessee's Common Core State Standards – Setting the Record Straight." <http://expectmoretn.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/09/Response-to-Did-you-know-final-9-25-13.pdf>
- xx State of Tennessee, Senate Bill No. 6. <http://www.tn.gov/firsttothetop/docs/Complete%20College%20Tennessee%20Act%20of%202010.pdf>
- xxi SCORE, "The State of Education in Tennessee 2012-13." 2013. <http://www.joomag.com/magazine/2012-scoreannual-report/0315827001387403103>
- xxii Lauren Camera, "Tennessee on Dogged Path to Race to Top Finish," Education Week, July 8, 2014.
- xxiii US Department of Education, "Race to the Top: Tennessee Report Year 2: School Year 2011-2012." February 2013. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance/tennessee-year-2.pdf>
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- xxvi National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Model Law Rankings – Tennessee. <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/TN/>