

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

September 2015

Tennessee Department of Education

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	7
Theory of Action.....	9
Data and Performance.....	11
Stakeholder Engagement.....	21
Root Cause Analysis	24
Strategies for Achieving Objectives	26
Ongoing Monitoring and Support.....	44
Conclusion	45
Appendix	46
Definitions	
Three Facts About TVAAS	
District Human Capital Data Report - Mock District	
District Equity Gap Report – Mock District	
Tennessee Education Association Feedback	

Executive Summary

Tennessee’s plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators is a continuation of the work we have engaged in over the last several years to improve students’ access to effective teaching. Through our Race to the Top plan, we have focused on a set of ambitious goals to address achievement gaps and ensure growth for all students. Our efforts to address issues of inequity are evident in many of the human capital strategies and initiatives we have implemented in pursuit of these goals. Moving into the 2015-16 school year, Tennessee aims to maintain its emphasis on rigorous standards, aligned assessment and strong accountability and to focus on five priority areas in a new strategic plan entitled Tennessee Succeeds. The strategic plan focus areas include early foundations and literacy, high school and the bridge to postsecondary, all means all, educator support and district empowerment. As part of this new plan, we continue to refine the ways we examine equity issues, consider the state’s key levers in addressing these issues, and develop a set of new data metrics to consider and share.

Theory of Action

Our theory of action for addressing issues of inequity centers on the following principles and key beliefs:

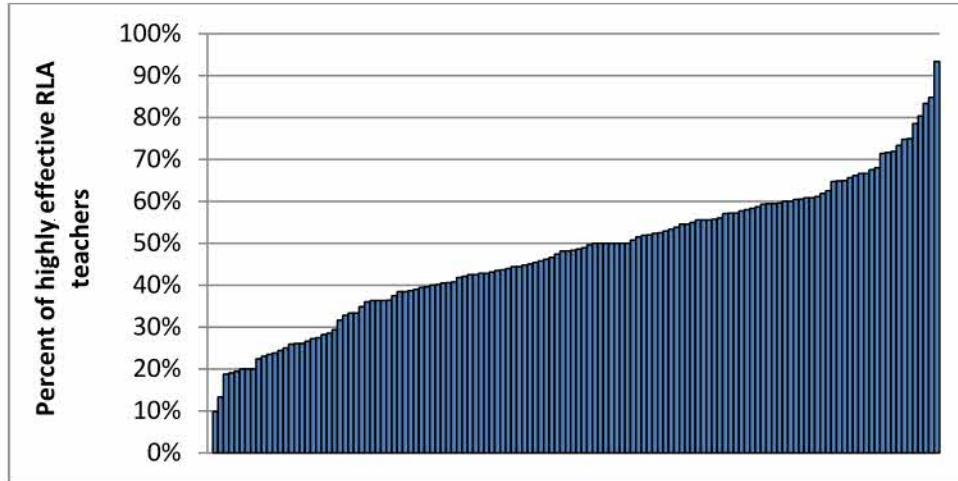
- Research shows that teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than any other in-school factor. Yet some students, in many instances the students who need good teaching the most, systematically do not have the same access to effective teaching.
- We believe this gap develops as a result of two key issues: 1) an inadequate supply of effective teachers and 2) the within- or between-school factors limiting access to effective teachers for particular groups of students. We carefully examine data metrics for each of these issues.
- There are a number of factors that impact a district’s supply of effective teachers and students access to those teachers. To address these issues we need to continue working with districts to improve human capital management—preparation, recruitment, hiring, staffing, evaluation, development, retention, and compensation. Much of this work has been underway in Tennessee over the last several years.
- Districts vary considerably in the set of human capital issues they face, and improving access to meaningful data we believe will lead to improved district-level decision-making in this area.
- Our strategy for engagement includes several phases: initial support for districts across the full spectrum of human capital decisions, providing data to districts to facilitate targeted analyses and initiatives, and, finally, public transparency and accountability for equity and results.

Data and Performance

Defining the Issue: We describe state-level equity gaps in terms of both the supply and access to highly effective teachers. Highly effective teachers are defined as those teachers who achieve a level four or five rating on our Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS). We believe that focusing on outcome measures like student growth is critical to improving equitable access.

Supply of Effective Teachers: To consider issues of equity, we first begin with the supply gap. As evidenced in Figure 1, we know that not all districts currently have the same supply of highly effective teachers. For some districts, the challenge of addressing issues of equity will begin with improving the pipeline of incoming teachers as well as the effectiveness of current teachers.

Figure 1: District Supply of Effective Reading/Language Arts Teachers



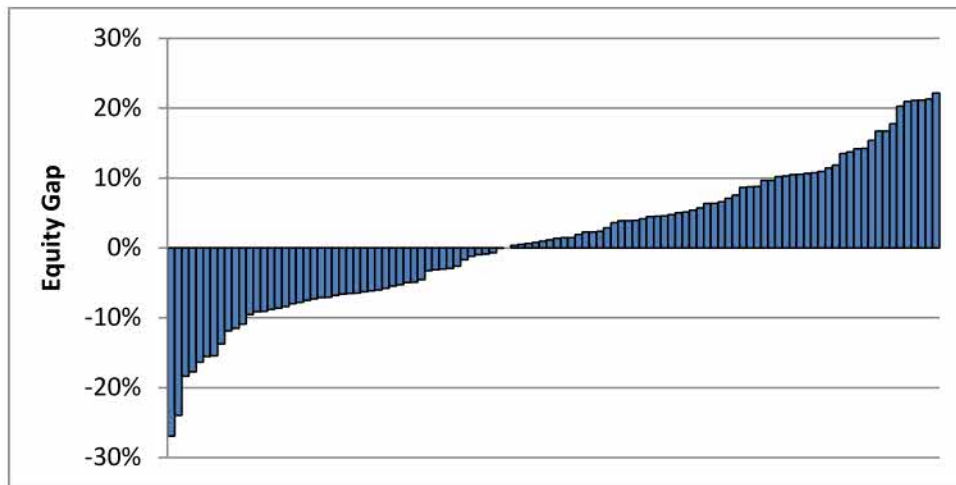
Each bar represents an individual district

Access to Effective Teachers: We also examine issues of access by determining whether particular groups of students have more or less access to effective teachers. We looked at this issue considering a variety of student groups, including prior achievement levels, minority, and low-income status. We ultimately chose to focus our analysis on advanced v. below basic students' access to highly effective teachers for several key reasons:

- We have a statewide focus on achievement and gap closure. In order to improve achievement of all students in our state, we must ensure our lowest achieving students have access to highly effective teaching
- A significant majority of our students who are low-income or minority are also low-achieving.
- The majority of our schools are homogenous in terms of racial and economic makeup. If we focused solely on minority or low-income students rather than on low achieving students of any race or income level, we would limit our ability to detect inequities between students within a single school.

Similar to what we found with supply data, we know that our districts vary considerably in the size of their equity gaps (i.e., the difference in access across student groups to highly effective teachers). Figure 2 below highlights that district variation in gap size.

Figure 2: District-level Variation in the Distribution of Highly Effective Teachers



Each bar represents the size of the equity gap in a district.

We also examined the underlying data about the types of equity gaps in each district. In our analysis we considered both gaps caused by within- and between-school differences. Our districts vary widely in the type of equity gaps that we saw.

Stakeholder Engagement

We have been engaged in ongoing stakeholder engagement about issues of human capital. We also engaged in some preliminary stakeholder engagement on these particular issues and have continued to engage in discussions with district leaders, teachers and external groups throughout Spring 2015. Internally, we formed a workgroup consisting of members of the Teachers and Leaders Division and the Research and Policy teams. We also engaged a broader network of internal stakeholders and held day-long planning meeting with representatives from multiple other teams including, our District Support Office, Office of Consolidated Planning and Monitoring, and our Commissioner's Office.

External stakeholder engagement will be a critical focus of our efforts in 2015. We already address issues of human capital with a variety of stakeholder groups, and the engagement around this plan will capitalize on these existing stakeholder meetings. We will continue to communicate with several key audiences regarding this plan, including:

- Directors of Schools
- Supervisors and principals
- Teachers and teacher advocacy groups
- Other external education organizations

A full matrix outlining specific organizations and groups is included in the full draft. In November 2014, solicited input from a small group of districts to discuss issues of human capital management and compensation. We provided these districts with a state level overview of new equity metrics and piloted an initial version of a human capital data report. Connecting with small networks of district leaders for

feedback will be a critical component of our ongoing engagement plan. In April and May 2015, we solicited input from the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, the Commissioners Teacher Advisory Council and a group of external organizations such as the Tennessee Education Association, the Urban League of Middle Tennessee, and the Tennessee Business Roundtable, to name a few.

Root Cause Analysis

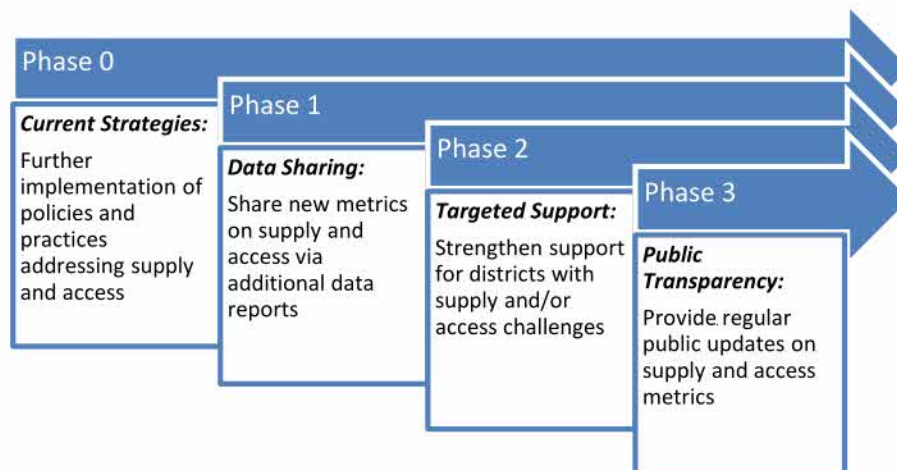
Given the variety of supply challenges and the size and type of equity gaps seen in our district data, we recognize that root causes will likely vary across districts. This is an area where we want to further engage stakeholders to understand the variety of root causes at the district level. We do anticipate, however, that there are some common root causes for supply and access challenges. The following is a list, more fully explained in the full plan, of what we anticipate those common root causes might be:

- Rural challenges
- Lack of quality preparation programs in specific geographic or subject areas
- Inadequate feedback, coaching, and professional learning for teachers
- Variance in leadership skills and capacity

Strategies for Achieving Objectives

We hope to capitalize on the strong policy foundation laid through our Race to the Top grant and other key initiatives to continue to address issues of equity. The strategies we are proposing fall into several phases designed to allow the state and districts opportunity to analyze new data metrics, build off of successful practices, and design local solutions. The graphic below outlines the key phases we intend to implement.

Figure 3: Equity Strategy Phases



In Phase 0 we will further our implementation of existing policies and practices. Initiatives like evaluation and differentiated pay have helped to address issues of both supply and access in the last several years. Other initiatives have focused specifically on improving the incoming and existing supply of educators or specifically addressing educator access. We have made changes to educator preparation policy, embarked on new partnerships to improve recruitment and hiring, and invested heavily in improving professional learning opportunities for teachers. In Phase 1 we will share new data metrics with districts through human capital reports and allow districts the time to develop and implement responses to this new information. Phase 2 will focus on a series of targeted supports for those districts with the greatest challenges. Finally, in Phase 3 we will ensure public transparency by reporting about our progress in closing equity gaps.

Ongoing Monitoring and Support

The state has heavily invested in support structures for districts throughout the last few years. These support structures will play a valuable role in supporting districts in addressing supply or access challenges. Our regional support offices, Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE), are charged with support of district achievement and will play a large role in assisting districts in planning and implementing equity strategies. We will also monitor equity data through a yearly release of new human capital data reports as well as providing regular updates to external stakeholders. To foster cross-departmental work streams and transparency, this data will be also shared with the Division of Consolidated Planning and Monitoring (CPM) and utilized as part of the annual LEA risk-assessment to prioritize district support and strategic planning.

