

# TISA in Action

## What Tennessee Advocates & Policymakers Need to Know

February 2025

The 2022 passage of the **Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA)** marked a major step toward ensuring all students have the resources they need to thrive. Find out how TISA impacts Tennessee’s students and how to engage.

### How TISA Supports Students Based on Their Needs

TISA is the state’s new formula that calculates funding for each district based on their students’ unique needs. TISA replaced the outdated Basic Education Program (BEP) and provides a more fair and transparent way to fund Tennessee’s schools.

With TISA’s four stackable components, Sofia generates more funding because of her area and unique learning needs, while Cameron receives more funding based on income and college readiness support.<sup>1</sup>

#### Let’s compare two unique students

	<b>Sofia</b> <i>A 2nd-grade English Learner in a rural district</i>	<b>Cameron</b> <i>An 11th grader from a low-income background in a Title I school</i>
<b>Outcomes Funding:</b> Incentivizes achievement on academic priorities	N/A	N/A
<b>Direct Funding:</b> Supports learning opportunities in priority areas like early literacy, career and technical education (CTE), and postsecondary readiness	2nd grade: \$500 (Early Literacy)	11th grade: \$186 (ACT)
<b>Weights:</b> Provides additional, stackable funds for students from low-income backgrounds or schools with concentrated poverty, English Learners, students with disabilities, and students in sparse or small districts	Unique Learning Need 4: \$4,245 (60%)  Sparse District: \$353.75 (5%)	Economically Disadvantaged: \$1,768.75 (25%)  Concentrated Poverty: \$353.75 (5%)
<b>Base:</b> Covers the essentials each student needs for a K-12 education	\$7,075	\$7,075
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$12,173.75</b>	<b>\$9,383.50</b>

<sup>1</sup> These examples use funding amounts from the TN Department of Education (TDOE) [TISA Guide for the 2024-25 school year](#).

# A New Era in Funding: TISA's Impact on Tennessee's Schools

After 30 years of the BEP, the passage of TISA brought a much-needed change for Tennessee's students.

## With the BEP:

- Tennessee was **44th** in the nation in K–12 education funding.
- Tennessee spent **\$3,899 less** per student than the national average in 2021.
- Districts received funds based on **decades-old calculations** for resources like staff and programs.
- The **lack of transparency** made it difficult for stakeholders to find out how schools were funded.

## With TISA:

- Governor Lee invested an additional **\$1 billion** in recurring state funds, a historic investment in K-12 education.
- TISA provided **\$866 more** per student<sup>2</sup> in the 2023-24 school year than the BEP provided the year before, and no district lost funding.
- Districts receive funding based on **unique student needs**.
- The **simple formula** helps stakeholders see how funds are calculated.

## District Perspectives<sup>3</sup>

**40%**

of districts reported changing their budgeting practices because of TISA

**56%**

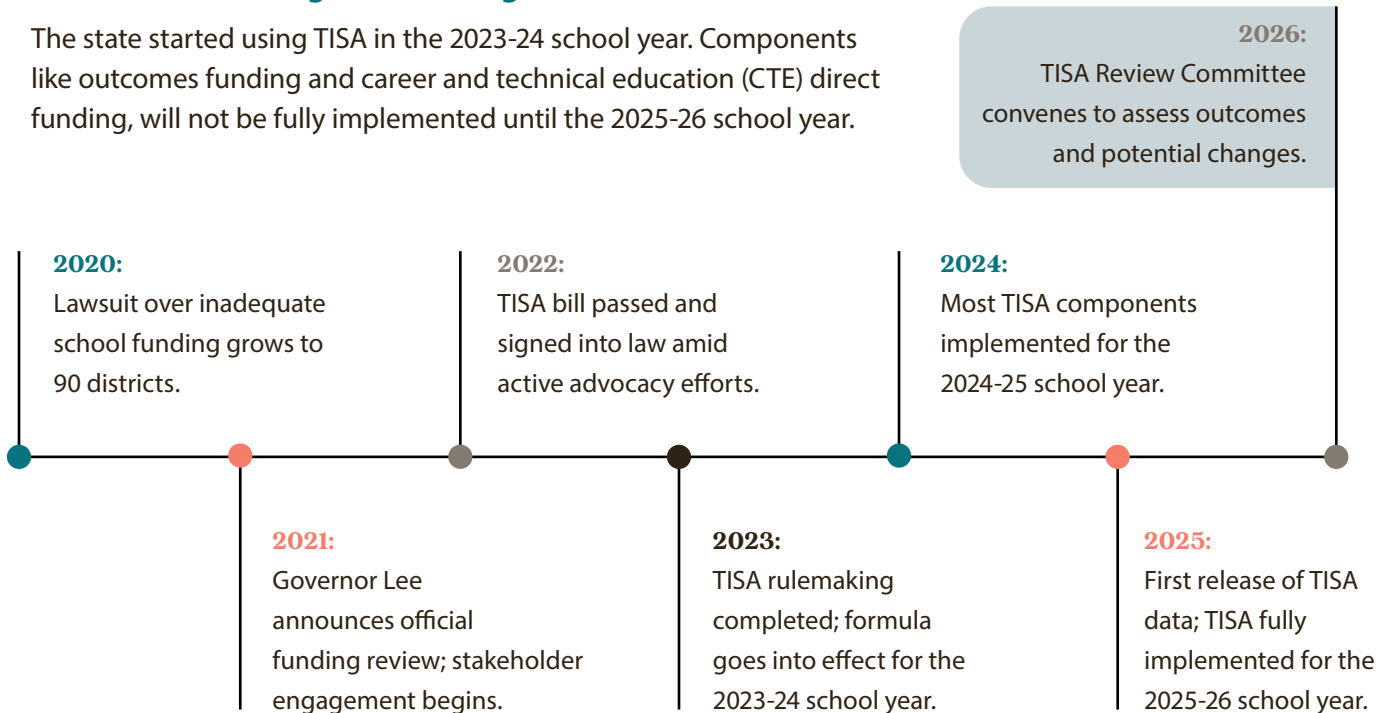
of districts said that it is easier to understand how funds are calculated with TISA than the BEP

**49%**

of districts said that information from TDOE is more transparent with TISA than the BEP

## From Launch to Progress: Tracking TISA and What's Next

The state started using TISA in the 2023-24 school year. Components like outcomes funding and career and technical education (CTE) direct funding, will not be fully implemented until the 2025-26 school year.



<sup>2</sup> Calculated using TN Comptroller funding data from 2023-24 and TDOE enrollment data from that same school year.

<sup>3</sup> From the TDOE 2024 TISA Survey.

# Understanding the Roles: Who's Responsible for TISA Funding, Spending, and Accountability

Each decision-maker has a different role related to TISA funding, spending, and accountability. Use the breakdown below to decide who to approach with questions or suggestions.

Decision-Maker		Role and Responsibilities
State	<b>Tennessee General Assembly</b>	<b>Legislative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish or change the funding formula framework through legislation.</li> <li>Appropriate funding each year for TISA, including setting the base amount.</li> </ul>
	<b>Tennessee State Board of Education</b>	<b>Policymaking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt rules for TISA implementation.</li> <li>Set accountability standards and reporting requirements.</li> </ul>
	<b>Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)</b>	<b>Administrative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculate and distribute TISA funds.</li> <li>Provide district guidance on spending and compliance.</li> <li>Monitor and report data on implementation.</li> </ul>
Local	<b>District Leaders</b> (Superintendents, Central Office Staff)	<b>Operational</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create district budgets based on TISA.</li> <li>Ensure funds are spent according to guidelines and local priorities.</li> </ul>
	<b>Local School Boards</b>	<b>Approving and Overseeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve district budgets each year and oversee spending.</li> <li>Hire and manage the superintendent.</li> <li>Represent community interests.</li> </ul>
	<b>School Principals</b>	<b>Managerial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage school budgets using TISA funds.</li> <li>Spend funds to meet local student needs and report outcomes.</li> </ul>

## Who represents you?

Find your [state legislators](#) and your [TN State Board member](#).

Go to your district's website to find your district leaders, principals, and local school board member.

## Advocacy Opportunities: How to Engage with TISA at the State and Local Levels

Advocates can shape how TISA works for students. The state controls funding amounts and data reporting, while districts decide how to spend their funds.

Transparency is vital to TISA. The TDOE must publish an [annual TISA report](#) by January 15 each year, including a cost review and district accountability reports. The TN Comptroller studies TISA's effectiveness and gives legislative recommendations with the first report delivered to legislators at the end of 2024.

District leaders and local school boards work together to decide how their budget should be invested, and local advocates can engage to make sure funding is used to meet students' unique needs.

### Questions to ask state legislators, the TN Department of Education, and the State Board of Education:

- How will you provide timely and accessible data on funding, spending, and outcomes?
- What support is the state providing to help districts budget their TISA dollars?
- How is the state evaluating if TISA's base and weights are enough to meet all students' needs?

### Questions to ask your local school board, district leaders, and principals:

- How does the district ensure that TISA funds benefit the students generating those funds (students from low-income backgrounds, English Learners, students with disabilities, etc.)?
- How will parents and community members be engaged in the budgeting process?
- How is the district evaluating progress toward goals for student outcomes?

### How to Get Started with Local Advocacy

1. **Look up your district's funding.** Use the [State Report Card](#) or [TISA Interactive Dashboard](#) to find out how TISA funds your district.
2. **Identify key issues.** Focus on priorities like equitable spending, transparency, or community involvement.
3. **Determine the right audience.** Use your concerns to decide who to approach.
4. **Take action.** Attend school board meetings or contact decision-makers to push for equitable funding and spending.

Have questions? Email [jhooverpotash@edtrust.org](mailto:jhooverpotash@edtrust.org) for more information.