

# Policy Agenda

The Tennessee Alliance for Equity in Education comprises 85+ organizations from across the state who believe education creates pathways to a more just Tennessee. We believe Tennessee, at its best, ensures all students can thrive, but first must remove systemic barriers along the educational continuum. As an Alliance, our work focuses on students who may have been overlooked, including students from low-income

backgrounds, students of color, students with disabilities, immigrant students, those in rural areas, justice-impacted students, student parents, LGBTQ+ youth, and English learners. The Alliance works to expand opportunity and attainment from preschool through postsecondary education to increase and influence the public and political will to act on issues of educational justice.



## Foundational Priority: Better Data for Better Decision Making

We believe Tennessee must implement regular, transparent, equity-focused data reporting to inform progress across all our policy priorities and equity actions.



## Priority 1: Promote Accessible, Rigorous, and Affirming Learning Experiences

**Equity Principle:** Every student in Tennessee attends a school that prepares them for the opportunities and demands of an increasingly complex and diverse world. Additionally, students receive high-quality and differentiated instruction and materials that are culturally and linguistically sustaining.

### Equity Actions:

- Maintain and prioritize a focus on student growth and equity in Tennessee's statewide accountability, assessment, and educator evaluation systems to ensure continuous improvement for districts, educators, and ultimately, students
- Ensure students have access to curriculum, materials, and supports that are high-quality, evidence-based, accurately reflect history, and affirm the diverse identities, cultures, languages, and backgrounds of our students
- Support student learning by providing integrated academic support evidence-based instruction and materials while maintaining access to grade-level content in math, ELA, social studies, and science
- Expand access to high-quality and affordable early childhood education to extend earlier access to literacy and other developmentally appropriate experiences
- Publish annual, disaggregated, and centralized data on advanced coursework, career and technical education, and high school pathways, including enrollment, credit attainment, and participant postsecondary enrollment



## Priority 2: Secure Fair Funding and Resource Equity

**Equity Principle:** Every public school student in Tennessee attends a school that receives robust and stable funding and resources based on student needs through a flexible, fair, and transparent funding system.

### Equity Actions:

- Provide TISA support and monitoring to strategically leverage funding to support students from low-income backgrounds, English learners, students with disabilities, and students in rural schools
- Increase state allocations to ensure our per-student funding level is at or above the national average (approx. \$17,853 per pupil)

- Publicly report all education revenue and expenditure data in an annual, longitudinal, disaggregated, transparent, and interactive format
- Ensure Tennessee's funding and accountability systems more accurately identify and resource schools serving students living in poverty



### Priority 3: Increase Educator Diversity and Quality

**Equity Principle:** Every student in Tennessee has access to skilled, well-resourced, and competitively compensated teachers, leaders, and staff who reflect the state's racial and linguistic diversity. Educators authentically engage in decision-making that impacts their profession.

#### Equity Actions:

- Publish detailed statewide, real-time teacher and leader retention, turnover, and vacancy data to better understand and support the educator workforce
- Increase sustainable low-cost, high-quality pathways into teaching that move the teacher workforce closer to student racial and linguistic diversity
- Increase the accessibility, affordability, reliability, and transparency of teacher, school, and district leadership pathways
- Support school districts to nurture and retain highly effective teachers and school leaders in their schools



### Priority 4: Support Students' Social-Emotional and Academic Development

**Equity Principle:** Every student in Tennessee has access to a physically safe, emotionally supportive, inclusive, diverse, and linguistically accessible education environment to support their learning and mental health. Students authentically engage in decision-making that impacts their education.

#### Equity Actions:

- Eliminate corporal punishment and exclusionary school discipline practices for non-violent offenses
- Provide training and resources for educators on practices and skill-building to support whole-child development
- Support student attendance and holistic wellbeing in both P-12 and higher education by investing in academic, mental health, and basic needs resources
- Increase opportunities for student voice and leadership to engage in decision-making for local and state education policymaking bodies



### Priority 5: Expand Access and Success in Higher Education

**Equity Principle:** Every Tennessean has access to an affordable postsecondary degree or credential that propels them to a career that ensures economic prosperity. In addition, all students have access to resources and wrap-around supports that drive them to and through higher education.

#### Equity Actions:

- Optimize Tennessee's financial aid system through a simple, flexible, need-centric design that centers the tuition and non-tuition needs of students from nontraditional and low-income backgrounds
- Leverage Tennessee's higher education master plan and outcomes-based funding formula to prioritize reducing attainment gaps by income level and race
- Provide targeted, high-quality pathway navigation, from high school to career, to address equity gaps in college access, completion, and economic mobility
- Ensure that every Tennessee high school graduate has equal access to postsecondary education, regardless of citizenship status or background