

Implementing Sustainable Educational Improvement Across Tennessee



Challenge

In 2010, Tennessee was selected by the U.S. Department of Education to receive \$500 million as part of the Race to the Top competition to implement a comprehensive educational-improvement plan focused on:

- transitioning to high-quality standards and assessments
- using data to improve instruction
- supporting and developing great teachers and leaders
- turning around the state's lowest-performing schools



The challenge for the Tennessee Department of Education (TDE) was aligning and thoughtfully implementing all these initiatives to move education forward for the state's more than **66,000 educators and nearly 1 million students**.

Strategies

As TDE's largest First to the Top implementation partner, Battelle for Kids (BFK) embarked on a multi-year engagement that included:

- Launching the [Tennessee Student Progress Portal](#) to **provide statewide access to online learning, resources, and information** about First to the Top services and supports
- Providing value-added training, resources, and support to nearly every K–12 public school district through a tiered professional development model to **maximize the use of student growth measures and other data for school improvement**
- Developing a blended learning model of face-to-face training complemented by online courses and resources to build teachers and school leaders' **assessment literacy and capacity to implement high-quality formative instructional practices (FIP)** that lead to increased student motivation and achievement
- Building a Strategic Compensation Learning Suite—including a series of research-based, online courses—to **help districts explore, design, implement, and manage a strategic compensation program** that best fits their organizational goals. BFK also organized regional meetings and provided coaching to inform change management and engage stakeholders every step of the way
- Researching the practices of highly effective teachers and principals to support the growth of educators across Tennessee

“Through Race to The Top, Tennessee took on extraordinarily difficult work in a relatively short period of time. Early signs of widespread academic progress are not only encouraging, but inspiring, and will help lay the ground work for further success as Tennessee continues its commitment to leading the nation in education reform.”

—Arnie Duncan, former U.S. Secretary of Education, June 2012

Impact and Results

As a result of this partnership:



Nearly 8,000 educators participated in 900+ days of workshops focused on implementing FIP and using data for improvement.



Tennessee educators completed 352,000 online courses to inform their work.



180+ highly effective teachers and principals participated in focus groups to identify best practices.



450 District Value-Added Leadership Team members and 30 credentialed Regional Specialists built educator capacity to understand and use value-added analysis in every district.



All Tennessee higher education institutions received access to the FIP and value-added online courses.

After implementation of First to the Top, Tennessee experienced three consecutive years of overall growth on the TCAP achievement tests.

In 2013, the majority of Tennessee districts **increased scores and narrowed achievement gaps** for black, Hispanic, and Native American students in almost every subject.

According to the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress report, Tennessee was the **fastest-improving state in education in the nation.**

In 2012, nearly every Tennessee district saw proficiency levels increase and **two-thirds improved in every 3–8 subject.**

Learn more about Battelle for Kids' work to move education forward in Tennessee at bfk.org/Tennessee.