In the last decade, Tennessee’s education reforms have driven historic improvements, resulting in high academic standards, standards-aligned assessments of student progress, and accelerated growth in statewide academic achievement for students in grades 3 through 12.1,2,3 Despite the improvements, student proficiency still falls far short of Tennessee’s goals.3,4

Especially striking is that by 3rd grade Tennessee’s students are already significantly behind, with nearly two-thirds not proficient in English and math.5 When student data is disaggregated to look at the academic performance of historically underserved groups, such as economically disadvantaged children, English learners, and Black and Hispanic students, proficiency rates drop to alarmingly low levels from 13% and 24%.5 Once students fall behind in 3rd grade, they tend to stay behind, or fall further, in subsequent years.5,6,7

Low proficiency in 3rd grade is a clear indication that the quality of children’s learning experiences leading up to 3rd grade requires significant improvements.

The next major challenge and opportunity for Pre-K-12 education in Tennessee is to ensure every student has a strong and robust early learning foundation to accelerate and sustain academic outcomes in 3rd grade and beyond.
Tennessee has moved in the right direction by prioritizing early learning and literacy. In April 2016, Tennessee’s Governor and Commissioner of Education launched Read to be Ready, a statewide initiative aimed at significantly improving reading outcomes for 3rd grade students. Since then, the department of education and key partners have implemented several literacy-focused efforts, including Read to be Ready coaching to support districts to improve early grades reading instruction.

Improving the quality of early literacy instructional practices is a critical and necessary step in the right direction, but to ensure significant gains in academic achievement for Tennessee’s 3rd grade students, it will be necessary to transform Tennessee’s fundamental approach to early grades’ instruction, pre-k through 3rd grade.

The years between pre-k and 3rd grade are a critical developmental continuum that launch children on a path to success in K-12 when they are immersed in high-quality learning experiences, every year. Unfortunately, Tennessee’s 3rd grade outcomes reveal that far too many of Tennessee’s children are not on a successful trajectory by the end of 3rd grade. Tennessee’s goal should be to create a coherent, engaging, and challenging educational experience for all children from pre-k through 3rd grade in which each grade builds on and elaborates on what was learned in the previous grade. Instructional quality and continuity should be anchored in evidenced-based early education instructional practices. Research and Tennessee-specific data point to four primary areas of focus to ensure excellence in pre-k to 3rd grade curriculum and instruction: 1) developmentally-appropriate teaching; 2) knowledge-building curriculum; 3) a focus on the development of social and work-related skills; and 4) high expectations and academic challenge for every student, irrespective of their starting point.

Key Pillars for Excellent Pre-K to Third Grade Instruction

1. Developmentally-Appropriate Teaching

Each child is unique, but there are universal trajectories of development that teachers, principals, and other adults working with children need to understand to be effective at helping children learn. Children between the ages of 4 and 8 (pre-k through 3rd grade) learn best through active engagement in challenging problem-solving activities. Between the ages of 3-6 children use their full range of senses to learn and process information through conversations with adults, play with peers, story-telling and listening, and hands-on experiences with educational materials, such as blocks, clay, paint, and other writing/drawing materials. As children progress through the early grades, learning to read and write fluently, their engagement with materials, people and ideas becomes increasingly structured and abstract, but they still require active, hands-on learning and frequent participation in group discussion and problem-solving to maximize learning.

In recent decades elementary schools have lost focus on developmentally-appropriate practices in favor of a “pushed down” approach to curriculum and instruction that focuses on accelerating academic skills at younger ages through formal instructional practices that are inappropriately matched to the developmental stage of the children being taught. This reflects a commonly held assumption that younger children learn in the same ways older children do, despite years of research demonstrating the benefits of developmentally-appropriate learning environments, including higher levels of cognitive functioning and enhanced social skills. As case in point, Vanderbilt University conducted a statewide analysis of pre-k classrooms in Tennessee, as well as subsequent district analyses of teaching practices in pre-k and kindergarten classrooms, and found – across studies – that developmentally-appropriate practices were infrequently used and widely inconsistent between classrooms and schools.

Early elementary classrooms should be buzzing with conversations, questions, and hands-on activities that captivate the attention of children in the class. Teacher-directed, whole-group instruction and formal, structured activities such as worksheets can be valuable when they are targeted to specific lessons, such as introducing a new concept or practicing newly acquired skills, but these practices should not be the primary mode of teaching in an early grades classroom. Instead, children should be provided with ample opportunities to explore and examine ideas, materials, a wide variety of texts, and natural phenomena, thoughtfully designed and facilitated by teachers well-versed in child development for the age or ages of children they teach.
2. Knowledge-Building Curriculum

Children are naturally intellectually curious, and as such, are continuously seeking information that will help them make sense of the world. The more enriching, diverse learning experiences a child has - across content areas - in the early years, the more knowledge that child will acquire to accelerate their learning in subsequent grades. Children who know more about the world – those with the broadest base of background knowledge and largest vocabularies – are more likely to demonstrate high scores on academic tests. What we know from analyses of Tennessee’s end-of-year assessments in second and 3rd grades, as well as via studies examining classroom literacy practices in elementary schools across the state is that knowledge-based competencies, such reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing are areas where instruction needs to be strengthened. Additionally, recent examination of elementary classroom instruction across the state has revealed a need for more knowledge-building in the early grades to ensure students not only read fluently by 3rd grade, but read with advanced comprehension skills and vocabulary, reflecting sufficient conceptual knowledge about the world.

The most effective way to increase conceptual knowledge in young children is to provide children with a plethora of hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences rooted in science, math, social studies and arts-related subject matter. Of particular importance in the early grades is time spent on math instruction. Children’s early math exposure and knowledge are associated with long-term academic achievement in all areas, not just math. Thus, the more time children get to spend in activities designed to help them grasp mathematical concepts while they are in the early grades, the better prepared they will be for 3rd grade and beyond.

A challenge for elementary schools is how to spend more time building students’ knowledge across content areas, which is particularly important for disadvantaged children who are less likely to have had enriching learning experiences prior to kindergarten and outside of school, and as a result, tend to come to school with large knowledge and vocabulary gaps. It is far more challenging to build knowledge and vocabulary than to help children acquire basic skills sets that are easily quantifiable, visible, and measured, such as naming letters and counting numbers. To tackle this challenge, elementary schools should ensure early grades curricula is knowledge-rich, inquiry-based, and developmentally-appropriate. Curricula should contain complex texts and content, targeted to the age and stage of the children being taught, grounded in inquiry and problem-solving. Rather than moving quickly through a rapid series of topics and/or concepts, students need time to dig deep into learning through units of study lasting several weeks. It is also important for school schedules to provide time for children to learn about multiple subject areas including math, literacy, science, social studies and the arts, and for teachers to integrate new ideas learned from reading, STEM and arts programs, as well as other types of learning experiences, to help children make connections across areas of content. The more interdisciplinary a curriculum is, the more a child is able to make connections and integrate their learning, which in turn develops and extends their foundation of knowledge.
3. Social and Work-Related Skill-Building

Academic skill development and knowledge acquisition are critical, but equally important is the development of social and work-related skills. Children with high social competence, based on social skills developed early in life such as sharing, cooperating, resolving conflicts, and helping other people, are more likely to attain higher education and well-paying jobs later in life. Children with strong work-related skills, such as the ability to focus, persevere on complex tasks, communicate effectively, and ask for help from teachers, are more likely to achieve academically and are better prepared for the demands of college and career.

In a recent analysis of 21st century workforce needs, business leaders identified “soft skills,” such as being able to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and creatively solve complex problems as the most important determinants of career success in a globally complex and rapidly-changing world. As schools have zeroed in on academic skills, the explicit teaching of soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking have become minimized, even though these skills are key to college and career preparation. Early grades research has demonstrated a frequent misalignment between pre-k and K-3 teachers’ emphasis on soft skills, with pre-k teachers believing that social-emotional development is more important than academic skills and elementary teachers believing academic skills are more important. This misalignment in beliefs is reflected in what is seen in the classroom and has been shown to have a negative impact on students’ social skills, approaches to learning, and math achievement.

To remedy the disconnect between pre-k and K-3, the state, districts and schools should provide tools and resources, including professional development for teachers and leaders, focused on the integration of explicit social and work-related skills development into academic curriculum and instruction, as well as in the life and culture of schools. Children need multiple, daily opportunities to practice listening, sharing, resolving conflicts, identifying their emotions and the emotions of others, connecting personal experiences to books, persevering on challenging tasks, solving problems through innovative approaches, asking and answering critical questions, and working cooperatively in pairs and groups.

4. High Expectations and Academic Challenge

Several studies have underlined the importance of adult expectations on student learning, demonstrating that students are more likely to meet expectations than not, whether or not those expectations are good, bad, correct, or misguided. While expectations can derive from analysis of past performance, other factors contribute to adults’ expectations of students, including gender, ethnicity, economic status, family circumstances, and age, based on a common tendency to discount what young children can learn and do. It is critically important for schools and districts to tackle barriers that may be rooted in adults’ belief systems about what students, especially those with diverse backgrounds, can achieve. This is all the more important because of Tennessee’s shift to higher academic standards that require more of students and teachers than ever before. All students are capable of rigorous learning and academic accomplishment when they have ample opportunities to dive deep into key text, ideas, and concepts, exploring them at increasing levels of depth and complexity, tailored to their unique strengths and needs.

Given that 35% of Tennessee’s school-age children live in poverty or near poverty, it is crucial to ensure early grades instruction propels disadvantaged children’s academic growth and achievement, while simultaneously and continuously challenging and engaging all students, irrespective of their starting points. A comprehensive evaluation of Tennessee’s Voluntary Pre-k (VPK) program by Vanderbilt University revealed that despite the VPK program better preparing children for kindergarten on a range of academic outcomes, children’s experiences in kindergarten, first, second and 3rd grades did not sustain the early gains. The study revealed that both groups of children - those who attended pre-k and those who did not attend pre-k - lost significant ground in second and 3rd grades, as reflected by academic declines.

This is why knowledge-rich, developmentally-appropriate curriculum aligned to academic standards, and based on extended units of study are important in the early grades. A common myth in early education is that academic challenge and developmentally-appropriate instruction are binary, but in actuality, they are highly integrated in excellent early grades instruction. Learning is a cumulative process, where knowledge, skills and competencies are developed based on developmentally-determined learning trajectories. In this cumulative process, young children learn best through inquiry-based learning experiences and carefully sequenced lessons that support, build on, and can be adapted to each stage in a child’s learning progression. Learning is best supported when children experience instruction that scaffolds deeper, underlying processes, such as reasoning and explaining, persisting when challenges are met, and transferring skills from one task to the next.
To do this, children need opportunities - and time - to build on prior learning, connect their lives to new ideas and experiences in the classroom, and think critically about new ideas. Early grades teachers must be able to differentiate their teaching to meet students’ unique needs while also holding high expectations for all learners.36

When curriculum and instruction is anchored in developmentally-appropriate teaching, knowledge-rich curriculum, equal prioritization of academic and social skills, and high expectations for all learners, students are able to build a strong foundation for learning and success in school.

Priorities for Action

To transform early elementary instruction in Tennessee TQEE has outlined six policy priorities for action:

1. Improve and expand quality pre-k to propel disadvantaged students’ growth and achievement;
2. Expand the use of knowledge-rich, developmentally-appropriate and inquiry-based curriculum in the early grades – across content areas;
3. Strengthen early grades teacher preparation and training;
4. Prioritize recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers in the early grades;
5. Provide comprehensive professional development for early grades teachers focused on the key pillars of excellent early grades instruction; and
6. Build principals’ knowledge of high quality early grades instruction.

1. Improved, Expanded Quality Pre-K.

In 2015, Tennessee received results from a Vanderbilt University Peabody Research Institute study of the state’s Voluntary Pre-K Program (VPK). The study revealed that students who participated in Tennessee’s VPK program demonstrated significant gains in kindergarten readiness versus their non-participating peers. However, a sub-study of VPK classrooms representative of the state also revealed inconsistency in the quality of environments, instruction, and outcomes across VPK classrooms, indicating a need to define and improve VPK program quality.16

These findings prompted TQEE to initiate the Pre-k Quality Act of 2016. That legislation was successfully enacted with near unanimous support in Tennessee’s legislature, and since then TDOE has begun implementing significant pre-k quality improvement efforts, including the following:37

- Pre-k funding for districts is now contingent on progress towards quality;38
- With the initiation of the Pre-K and kindergarten portfolio, teachers now have a way to monitor student growth, aligned to academic standards;39 and
- Curriculum choices for VPK districts have been streamlined to include only evidence-based, high-quality curriculum options.38

These and other pre-k improvement efforts have set a new course for Tennessee’s pre-k programs and outcomes, but quality improvements must be deepened and sustained. Student performance data consistently reveal that historically underserved subgroups, which include disadvantaged children eligible for VPK, perform at substantially lower rates than their peers in reading and math in 3rd through 5th grade, with proficiency in the low teens to low twenties.5 Students who fall behind in the early years rarely catch up in later grades when remediation efforts are costlier and less likely to succeed.

To ensure all Tennessee children succeed in school, the state must continue prioritization of pre-k quality improvement initiatives, combined with investments in professional development for teachers and school leaders, and the infrastructure needed for quality monitoring systems.
Further, as proof points of successful quality improvement efforts are achieved, VPK should be expanded to serve more disadvantaged children in local communities where additional program capacity is needed.

Given the proven benefits of TN VPK in helping disadvantaged children successfully prepare for kindergarten, it’s smart policy to expand quality programs to serve Tennessee’s young children who need them most.

2. Stronger Curricula.

Tennessee has taken a critical step to improving early grades student outcomes by setting high expectations through newly revised and aligned academic standards, pre-k through 3rd grade.\textsuperscript{30,31} Standards serve as a goal post, creating grade-level learning targets for students to ensure they are college and career ready by the time they graduate high school. \textbf{The next critical step is to ensure teachers are able to translate grade-level academic standards into excellent instruction, which is where curricula plays a key role.} Curricula refers to the specific lessons and academic content taught in a school. Curricula include instructional materials, which can be textbooks, other forms of texts, lesson plans, activities, and other tangible resources for teachers. \textbf{To be most effective, pre-k through 3rd grade curricula and accompanying instructional materials should align seamlessly with state standards and provide both supports for novice teachers and flexibility for experienced teachers to augment curriculum with their unique instructional talents, in response to students’ needs and capabilities.}\textsuperscript{40}

Tennessee is taking important steps toward improving the quality of pre-k to 3rd grade curriculum by:

- narrowing state-approved pre-k curricula choices from 30+ options to 3 evidenced-based, standards-aligned options\textsuperscript{38};
- providing districts with funding for new pre-k curriculum materials and teacher training\textsuperscript{38};
- strengthening state-approved K-12 literacy instructional materials options\textsuperscript{9}; and
- establishing protocols for districts to use as they choose new literacy materials\textsuperscript{9}.

The state should maintain the momentum of early literacy curriculum initiatives while also strengthening Pre-K-3 curricula in other content areas. In particular, \textbf{research has revealed that math knowledge at the beginning of elementary school is the single most powerful predictor determining whether a student graduates from high school and attends college.}\textsuperscript{41} Unfortunately, math tends to be the subject where pre-k and kindergarten teachers spend the least amount of time in the average daily schedule.\textsuperscript{41,16}

Too many children start kindergarten with knowledge deficits that stem from their lack of high quality early learning experiences and quality curriculum is an important part of the solution. Not only can quality curriculum help shore up conceptual knowledge, but it can also effectively support the development of soft skills and other work-related skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.\textsuperscript{40}

To this end, prioritization should be given to:

1. Building on the momentum of current literacy efforts to strengthen instructional materials by extending support to additional districts to ensure a comprehensive, statewide approach;
2. Strengthening pre-k through 3rd grade curricula and instructional materials in all content areas, including math, science, social studies, and STEM with a focus on developmentally-appropriate practices and knowledge-rich content; and
3. Aligning newly adopted pre-k curriculum with K-3 curriculum to ensure instructional continuity.
3. Improved Teacher Prep.

Ensuring early grades teachers are prepared on the front end of their career is essential to improve early grades teaching. The aim in preparing pre-service teachers is to ensure teachers are steeped in knowledge of early childhood development and instructional best practices specific to the effective teaching of young children.

Tennessee currently has 32 approved Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher preparation and endorsement programs with variable course and practicum requirements and minimal visibility into program quality. ECE teacher prep program requirements vary depending on where the ECE program is housed at an accredited institution. For example, if an ECE program is led through a department of teaching and learning, the primary emphasis tends to be curriculum and instruction, but if the program is led through a department of human development the primary emphasis tends to be on child development. Both areas of emphasis are necessary to ensure candidates are fully prepared for effective early grades teaching. Further, all course and practicum requirements should be aligned to a Tennessee-defined and evidenced-based definition of highly effective early grades teacher competencies to ensure program quality and consistency.

Tennessee’s department of education and State Board of Education recently revised and updated quality standards for literacy preparation and endorsement, and it would benefit the state to conduct a similar process to update, revise and align quality standards for ECE preparation and endorsement. Additionally, the Tennessee State Board of Education redesigned and began publishing an annual Teacher Preparation Report Card in 2017 providing focused information about providers, including the effectiveness of graduates. ECE metrics are not currently included and/or disaggregated in the report, but they could be added through the inclusion of student growth portfolio metrics, beginning in pre-K, and other qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating the effectiveness of ECE preparation programs.

Endorsement for new teachers is further complicated by the multiple pathways pre-K to 3rd grade teachers can pursue, including Pre-K-3, K-6, Pre-K-K and/or special education categories, each with specific and unaligned requirements for completion. Of particular concern is the accelerated ECE endorsement pathway where an upper elementary, middle or high school teacher seeking an early grades placement and ECE endorsement can take significantly accelerated and abbreviated courses, with limited requirements for demonstrated expertise in child development, elementary content knowledge and curriculum and instructional expertise.

To ensure Tennessee develops and sustains a strong pipeline of effective early grades teachers, focus should be given to:

1. Ensuring education preparation programs (EPPs) meet quality standards for early childhood education (ECE) preparation that are based on a Tennessee-specific definition of essential early grades teacher competencies;
2. Including data that reflects ECE quality in the State Board of Education’s annual Teacher Preparation Report Card, such as pre-K and k portfolio scores, narrative profiles of ECE programs, and/or disaggregated ECE metrics from overall program metrics; and
3. Strengthening early grades endorsement by streamlining endorsement categories, requiring the full breadth of endorsement criteria for all categories, and aligning assessment requirements with categories and essential teacher competencies.

4. Effective Teacher Recruitment and Retention.

Recent research from Vanderbilt’s Peabody Research Institute examined what happened to VPK students when they entered elementary school. The studies revealed two critical findings: 1) highly effective teachers are better able to sustain the early gains of pre-K; and 2) the most disadvantaged students coming from VPK programs are exposed to fewer highly effective teachers in the early grades. In fact, there is evidence, which Vanderbilt is currently validating, that low performing teachers in Tennessee are too often deliberately placed in pre-K to 2nd grade classrooms where there is little accountability for outcomes.

While good teaching is critical for every classroom and every school year, placing weaker teachers in early grades classrooms has an outsized effect on student academic success, because it is in pre-K through 3rd grade that the foundation must be laid for successful future learning. Research has clearly found that when early grades instruction is weak students tend to drop out of school at six times the rate of those who were better prepared as young children.
The data is also clear that economically disadvantaged students tend to start school significantly behind their more advantaged peers. 49 The good news is that catchup by as many as two grade levels in a given year can be accomplished by the most effective teachers. 50 It’s crucial therefore that highly effective teachers are recruited and retained in early grades classrooms across the state, with special prioritization given to schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged students.

**While recruitment and retention are largely a job of school districts, state policy can and should employ strategies to expand the number of high quality teachers in early grades classrooms, especially those with high concentrations of disadvantaged children.** Potential strategies include:

1. Providing guidance and expectations for districts on how to recruit highly effective early grades teachers based on a common definition of early grades teacher competencies;

2. Providing incentives for districts to recruit highly effective early grades teachers to low performing schools and/or those with high concentrations of disadvantaged students; and

3. Expanding early grades teachers’ career opportunities through statewide fellowships, leadership academies, and compensated leadership opportunities to mentor, coach and develop peers.

### 5. Excellent Teacher Development.

Teaching quality is the single biggest determinant in children’s academic success. 36 As such, **Tennessee must deepen its commitment to support early grades teachers as they make instructional shifts in response to newly revised academic standards, better-aligned curricula, and required improvements based in the four key pillars of excellent early grades instruction.**

Professional development for early grades teachers at the state level should begin with a comprehensive needs assessment, using multiple sources of data including the TNDOE annual educator survey and a statewide examination of Pre-K to 3rd grade classroom practices, including and beyond literacy. 51 At the district level, professional development should be focused and targeted to the specific and unique needs of early grades teachers, and as much as possible, be job-embedded. 52

Examples of potential focus areas for early grades teachers’ professional development based on the four pillars of effective early childhood instruction include the following:

- Creating a positive emotional climate;

- Designing high quality early learning environments and choosing quality educational materials that facilitate the acquisition of age-appropriate knowledge and skills in math, literacy, science and social studies;

- Increasing the rigor of instruction through higher-order questioning, interdisciplinary content, and complex texts;

- Providing and designing increasingly complex sequential activities, which require children to plan and work through several steps to achieve a learning goal;

- Fostering cooperative and associative interactions between and among peer groups; and

- Capturing information about young children’s learning through observational assessments and using that information to adjust instructional techniques. 53, 54
To develop these and other important competencies, early grades teachers need a high-quality professional development system that includes multiple layers of support, including:

- Adequate state and regional infrastructure to support districts with targeted trainings, technical support, and job-embedded professional learning;
- Teacher evaluation and non-evaluative resources for elementary principals to use to effectively coach teachers through frequent feedback to improve early grades teaching; and
- Online resources including best practice videos, lesson plans, and guidance documents for professional learning communities accessible in and out of school time.\textsuperscript{55}

Professional development that is guided and informed by the needs of teachers, as well as being anchored in developmentally-appropriate practice, knowledge-building instruction, and standards-aligned instructional shifts, will result in far greater gains for students and improved academic outcomes in 3rd grade and beyond.

6. Excellent Principal Preparation and Development.

School leaders set the culture for a school and provide instructional leadership for teachers and staff.\textsuperscript{56} To ensure high quality early grades instruction for students, elementary school principals must be able to effectively support, coach and evaluate teachers based in principals’ knowledge of child development and early grades pedagogy. Unfortunately, most elementary principals do not have ECE experience or expertise, making it difficult for principals to effectively support early grades teachers and for teachers to confidently employ developmentally-appropriate instructional practices.\textsuperscript{57}

To build principals’ knowledge and expertise in ECE, Tennessee should prepare, develop, and support principals, as well as hold them accountable by:

1. Integrating ECE instructional standards and best practices in required elementary principal professional development courses and trainings;
2. Strengthening elementary principal endorsement to include an Early Childhood Education credential;
3. Training elementary principals on how to effectively coach early grades teachers and hold them accountable to the four pillars of effective early grades instruction; and
4. As mentioned in our policy brief on Strengthening Accountability and Continuous Improvement in the Early Grades, determine ways to explicitly link school accountability with early grades student outcomes.

Conclusion

In the last decade, Tennessee’s education reforms have driven historic improvements, resulting in accelerated growth in statewide academic achievement for students in grades 3 through 12, but despite the improvements, student proficiency still falls far short of Tennessee’s goals.

Especially striking is that by 3rd grade Tennessee’s students are already significantly behind, with nearly two-thirds not proficient in English and math. Low proficiency in 3rd grade is a clear indication that the quality of children’s learning experiences leading up to 3rd grade requires significant improvements.

The next major challenge and opportunity for Pre-K-12 education in Tennessee is to ensure every student has a strong and robust early learning foundation to accelerate and sustain academic outcomes in 3rd grade and beyond.

To ensure every student has a strong and robust early learning foundation, pre-k to 3rd grade instructional quality and continuity should be anchored in evidenced-based early education instructional practices, including: 1) developmentally-appropriate teaching; 2) knowledge-building curriculum; 3) a focus on the development of
social and work-related skills; and 4) high expectations and academic challenge for every student, irrespective of their starting point.

To transform early elementary instruction in Tennessee TQEE offers six policy priorities for action:

1. Improve and expand quality pre-k to propel disadvantaged students’ growth and achievement;

2. Expand the use of knowledge-rich, developmentally-appropriate and inquiry-based curriculum in the early grades – across content areas;

3. Strengthen early grades teacher preparation and training;

4. Prioritize recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers in the early grades;

5. Provide comprehensive professional development for early grades teachers focused on the key pillars of excellent early grades instruction; and

6. Build principals’ knowledge of high quality early grades instruction.

Smart, targeted investments made at the start of Tennessee students’ educational careers will launch them on a path to sustained academic success, producing far greater rewards for students, families, and communities across Tennessee.


15 L. Dunn & S. Kontos, "Research in Review: What Have We Learned about Developmentally Appropriate Practice?” YOUNG CHILDREN 52 (5): 4-13. Copyright 1997 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. PS 526 718.


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