



# BRIEFING

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

## TENNESSEE EDUCATION INNOVATION PLAN

*"From time to time, the stars line up to create opportunities you never expected. As public officials, we're obligated to seize the moment when that happens. That moment is now in public education in Tennessee."*

— GOVERNOR PHIL BREDESEN

Announcement of Special Session of the 106<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
December 15, 2009

### INTRODUCTION

Governor Bredesen, with support from key lawmakers, is calling a special session of the 106<sup>th</sup> General Assembly beginning January 12 to consider a range of education-reform proposals designed to spur improvement in Tennessee's education pipeline — specifically, improving student performance and graduation rates at both the high school and college levels. Collectively, the proposals are known as the "Tennessee Education Innovation Plan."

Two separate bills comprise the Plan and are being introduced in the legislature. First, the "Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010" will make changes in law as part of the Volunteer State's push in the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top competition. Second, the "Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010" will make changes in law in an effort to improve college completion rates, which lag the nation. Both bills are described below.

### TENNESSEE FIRST TO THE TOP ACT

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), signed into law by President Obama in February 2009, provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
4. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

-MORE-

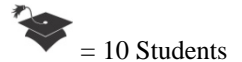
National education-reform groups view Tennessee as competitive in Race to the Top as a result of key successes in recent years, including the 2008 adoption of career- and college-ready high school standards through the American Diploma Project. Additionally, the Volunteer State is recognized for having one of the nation's oldest and most robust databases for tracking "student growth," or a child's improvement in the classroom over time. The Volunteer State's database for tracking student growth is known as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS).

More than one-quarter of Tennessee's score in Race to the Top will be determined by state education-reform measures that promote the development of "Great Teachers and Leaders." Underpinning this part of the competition is a requirement that states design and implement teacher and principal evaluations consisting of multiple measures and that take into account student growth data as "a significant factor."

To effectively compete in Race to the Top, Governor Bredesen is proposing key measures, including:

- ✓ Establishing an "Achievement School District" that allows the commissioner of the state Department of Education to intervene in consistently failing schools.
- ✓ Requiring annual evaluations of teachers and principals.
- ✓ Creating a 15-member teacher evaluation advisory committee to recommend guidelines and criteria to the State Board of Education.
- ✓ Allowing local school systems to create local salary schedules for teachers and principals, with state approval. (Current law requires a state-mandated schedule.)
- ✓ Removing limitations on use of TVAAS data so the data can be used in making decisions on teacher tenure.

**TENNESSEE'S EDUCATION PIPELINE**



	For every <b>100</b> ninth grade students:
	<b>67</b> graduate from high school in four years.
	<b>43</b> go directly to college the fall following graduation.
	<b>29</b> return for their sophomore year of college.
	<b>19</b> graduate with an associate's degree in three years or a bachelor's degree in six years.

NCHEMS, 2006

-MORE-

## COMPLETE COLLEGE TENNESSEE ACT

At the same time the federal Race to the Top competition is drawing to a close, Governor Bredesen is wrapping up nearly year-long talks with a bipartisan group of state lawmakers on how to improve higher education in Tennessee – consisting of colleges and universities in the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and University of Tennessee (UT) systems.

The challenge is clear: The Volunteer State lags the nation in completion of bachelor's degrees (40th) and associate degrees (45th). On average, only 46% of full-time students at four-year schools graduate within six years, and only 12% of full-time community college students attain associate degrees within three years.

In fall 2009, the nonprofit Complete College America – funded by the Carnegie Corporation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Lumina Foundation – assisted the Governor and lawmakers in reviewing Tennessee's colleges and universities. Earlier this month, Complete College America delivered comprehensive recommendations that serve as the basis for new legislation.

To improve college completion rates in Tennessee, Governor Bredesen is proposing key measures including:

- ✓ Funding higher education based in part on success and outcomes, including higher rates of degree completion.
- ✓ Making community colleges the centerpiece in Tennessee's strategy by expanding common programs and common courses to promote consistency and quality across the two-year system.
- ✓ Creating a statewide transfer policy so that any student who earns a two-year degree at a community college can move on to a four-year university as a junior.
- ✓ Requiring TBR and UT to establish dual-admission and dual-enrollment policies at all two- and four-year colleges and universities.

Tennessee's college-completion strategies are a natural extension of K-12 education reform measures. In fact, Race to the Top places a premium on states that aren't simply focused on getting kids through high school but also are looking at college enrollment.

###