HOW DOES **TENNESSEE** SUPPORT STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (SEAD)?

The Education Trust

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (SEAD) IS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SUPPORTING STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING THAT IS INTEGRAL TO ENSURING POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND. schools must ensure students experience healthy development and rigorous learning. Unfortunately, students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and other underserved students often do not have positive learning experiences. There are six key policy issues that state leaders can implement to create equitable and safe learning environments that promote positive SEAD for all students. School and district leaders should:

1 Develop inclusive school discipline and dress code policies

2 Provide meaningful professional development and supports for all adults in schools

3 Ensure equitable access and support for success in rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula

4 Engage students, families, and communities as full partners

5 Provide access to integrated wraparound services and supports

6 Diversify the educator workforce

While many of these policy areas are led at the local level, state leaders can support local leaders with three key levers:

1. Prioritize policies that impact SEAD in state goals. In doing so, state leaders can set the expectation for local leaders to implement SEAD with an equity lens

2. Provide evidence-based, equity-focused guidance and sufficient funding to ensure local leaders have the necessary resources to meet these goals

3. Make data publicly available so advocates and local and state leaders can make informed decisions about what works and how to improve

Notes on implementation

State actions set the stage for districts and schools to implement strong practices that holistically support students' social, emotional, and academic development. However, there is a wide range of implementation at the local level. Some states may have strong policies that are not yet being implemented with fidelity at the district level, and some districts may choose to implement strong policies and practices despite a lack of policy or guidance from the state level. If your school district is not fully implementing the policies discussed below, you can ask district leaders what they are doing to meet or surpass the expectations set forth by the state.

District leaders looking to implement better practices can utilize the tools available from the Alliance for Resource Equity (ARE), a partnership between Ed Trust and Education Resource Strategies, which categorizes the student experience into 10 "dimensions of equity." ARE's toolkit includes a diagnostic tool that is organized around "key questions" and how to identify problem areas. It also includes practical guidebooks that offer actions to address these problems. Under each section below, relevant key questions from the ARE diagnostic tool and guidebooks are highlighted for district leaders and advocates who want to improve policies and practices at the local level.

HOW DOES TENNESSEE SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH **SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**?

TOO OFTEN, HARMFUL SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AND DRESS CODES HAVE BEEN USED TO DAMAGE STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT. As such, students of color and students with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from school and miss opportunities to learn and develop holistically. States can influence district and school disciplinary actions by setting clear goals to reduce disparities and overuses in discipline, ensuring a strong set of data is publicly transparent, and adopting more positive approaches to discipline, such as restorative justice.

Bright spots

Tennessee stands out as doing positive work in school discipline by…

- Setting clear goals for decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline and reducing disparities in discipline
- Setting policies and providing resources that…
    - Provide guidance in adopting positive discipline practices and policies
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that is disaggregated by race, gender, English learner status, students with disabilities, socioeconomic status, and type of punishment (e.g., in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion)

How to improve

Tennessee still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize…

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

    - Ensure students do not experience physical harm in schools, <u>including banning corporal punishment</u> and having sufficient parameters around the use of restraint (such as requiring only staff trained in both de-escalation and safe restraint be allowed to restrain students, requiring restraint only be used in instances of immediate harm to oneself and others, and prohibiting prone restraints)

    - Ban harmful discipline policies and practices, including zero tolerance policies, discriminatory hair and grooming codes, and the use of exclusionary discipline for non-violent offenses, young learners, and subjective or minor offenses like defiance.

    - Provide guidance for schools and districts to co-develop with families clear, student-centered codes of conduct that align with a restorative justice approach

    - Ensure the state education agency has staff to support districts with technical assistance and implementation for positive discipline practices

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

    - Shows the categories of the offenses, lengths of punishments, and identifies the number of students suspended or expelled more than once

    - Can be cross-tabulated to show the intersections of identities in discipline data.

- Collecting and publicly reporting data annually on the use of corporal punishment, disaggregated by race, gender, English learner status, students with disabilities, and socioeconomic status

Key question for district leaders:

<u>Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?</u>

HOW DOES TENNESSEE SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**?

TO EQUITABLY SUPPORT STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATORS MUST HAVE THE SKILLS TO CREATE CULTURALLY AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENTS, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR STUDENTS, AND SUPPORT STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS. They must also have mindsets geared toward anti-racism. Professional development (PD) ensures that educators learn these mindsets and skills. States should encourage and support districts to provide high-quality and relevant professional learning opportunities, especially in asset-based pedagogies (e.g., culturally responsive practices); diversity, equity, and inclusion; adult social-emotional learning (SEL) or adult mindsets; and strategies and approaches for evidence-based, equity-focused, systemic SEL for students.

Bright spots
Tennesee stands out as doing positive work in professional development by…

- Setting policies and providing resources that…
  - Provide guidance for evidence-based practices to support professional learning, including professional learning communities
  - Require preparation programs to provide training in promoting environments that support developmental processes, including through disciplinary and instructional texts that represent diversity and organizing to support collaborative learning
  - Require educators to develop competency in social and emotional health and well-being
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that shows educators' perceptions of professional development offerings at the district level

How to improve
Tennessee still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize…

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that clearly articulate a vision for professional development with an aim of addressing adult mindsets and SEL, and providing the skills necessary to support students' well-being
- Setting policies and provide resources that…
  - Provide robust funding for districts, which can then allocate funding towards create evidence-based professional development structures, including professional learning communities and induction or mentoring programs
  - Require preparation programs to provide training that improves educator mindsets, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion training, or anti-bias/anti-racism training
  - Require educators to develop competency in equitable practices, such as cultural competency, multi-tiered systems of support, culturally relevant pedagogy, and positive discipline practices
- Collecting and publicly reporting data that shows educators' perceptions of professional development offerings at the district level

Key questions for district leaders:

Does each student have access to strong teachers?

Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?

Is each student enrolled in a school and attending classes that are racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse?

HOW DOES TENNESSEE SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH **EDUCATOR DIVERSITY**?

ACCESS TO A RACIALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE TEACHER WORKFORCE IS BENEFICIAL FOR ALL P-12 STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR, WHO OFTEN THRIVE IN CLASSROOMS LED BY TEACHERS WHO SHARE THEIR RACIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND. Educators of color are more likely to have higher expectations for their students of color. Students of color and White students also feel cared for and academically challenged by teachers of color. Additionally, research shows that Black students who have at least one Black teacher are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to enroll in college, and teacher-student racial matches affects social, emotional, and academic skills. By working to diversify the educator workforce and retain diverse educators, schools will foster a sense of belonging and challenge students to thrive.

Bright spots

Tennessee stands out as doing positive work in educator diversity by…

- Setting clear, numeric goals at the state and district level that are developed with local stakeholder input to increase student access to diverse educators

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

    - Provide funding for alternative routes programs that engage Grow Your Own teacher strategies to address district and candidate needs

    - Invest in scholarship and loan forgiveness programs to attract students of color into preparation programs

    - Adopt rigorous program approval standards to compel teacher preparation programs to recruit and graduate candidates of color

    - Offer assessment alternatives that are oral based for native language speakers of foreign languages, and eliminate the need for teachers licensed in other states to take the Praxis to come into the state

- Collecting and publicly reporting the racial makeup of candidates attending and completing in-state teacher preparation programs annually, district-level data on the racial demographics of the educator workforce, and state-level data on the retention rates of educators of color

How to improve

Tennessee still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize…

- Setting policies and providing resources that…
    - Prioritize funding partnerships between minority-serving institutions and districts with higher percentages of students of color for Grow Your Own teacher programs
    - Provide full tuition scholarships targeted towards students of color and convert student loans to a grant program
    - Invest in teacher academies and dual enrollment programming to promote the teaching profession to a racially diverse student population
    - Invest in an induction and mentoring program that provides at least two years of support for new teachers
- Collecting and publicly reporting annual school-level data on the racial demographics of the educator workforce, requiring districts to provide their data to the state, and providing their data on the retention rates of educators of color through a state dashboard, school report cards, or a state-developed report

Key questions for district leaders:

Does each student have access to strong teachers?

Does the teacher workforce reflect student diversity?

HOW DOES TENNESSEE SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH
RIGOROUS AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING CURRICULA?

IN ORDER TO THRIVE, STUDENTS MUST BE CHALLENGED AND ENCOURAGED TO MEET HIGH EXPECTATIONS. This means students should have access to rigorous, deeper learning and culturally sustaining curricula. When students can both see themselves in the work and feel their teachers challenging them to excel, what follows is a stauncher belief in themselves to reach their goals.

Bright spots

Tennessee stands out as doing positive work in rigorous and culturally sustaining curricula by…

- Setting policies and providing resources that…
    - Create a network of districts to support implementation of high-quality curriculum
    - Encourage the use of objective measures in placing students in advanced courses

How to improve

Tennessee still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize…

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that identify the need for curricula to be both rigorous and culturally sustaining, and identify specific actions that must be taken to equitably enroll students in advanced coursework

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

  - Ensure the state education agency has staff available to support districts with implementation of culturally relevant or culturally sustaining curricula

  - Require automatic enrollment in advanced coursework in high school

  - Provide guidance on how to select culturally sustaining curricula that is aligned to learning standards, and provide a review process for determining whether curricula meet these criteria

Key questions for district leaders:

Does each student have access to teaching practices that are engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned?

Does each student have access to high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum and instructional materials?

Is each student enrolled in courses that set them up for success in college and a meaningful career, including equal access to advanced courses?

HOW DOES TENNESSEE SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH **STUDENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**?

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT. When educators engage the communities they serve, they gain a deeper understanding of their students, including their strengths, identities, and needs. This fortifies relationships with students and increases students' academic success. It is also important that school leaders ensure that the voices of students of color and their families, and those from low-income and other marginalized backgrounds, are centered in policy and practice decisions.

Bright spots

Tennessee stands out as doing positive work in student, family, and community engagement by…

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

  - Create a statewide office that provides support for engagement, including professional development for school and district staff and information dissemination

  - Include student, family, and community engagement in teacher evaluation rubrics

- Provide guidance that explicitly links family and community engagement to student learning, identifies evidence-based strategies, and offers guidance on partnering with community organizations to accelerate learning

- Ensure student voice is included in state-level decisions by having a student representative on the state board of education

- Include student, family, and community engagement in teaching standards and school leader standards

How to improve

Tennessee still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize…

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that provide a clear plan that details how districts can use evidence-based practices for engagement

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

  - Provide guidance on student, family, and community engagement at all levels of the P-12 system with information on funding and for how schools and districts should engage students and families that are most often marginalized

  - Ensure family and community voice is included in state-level decisions, such as by including a parent or caregiver on the state board of education or having a parent advisory council

  - Requiring training in student, family, and community engagement for leader certification

- Collecting and publicly reporting data that shows disaggregated information about student, family, and community engagement, such as student and family survey and satisfaction data

Key questions for district leaders:

Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?

Does each student who needs targeted social-emotional support receive it?

Does each student who needs targeted physical and mental health supports receive it?

Does each student who needs targeted family support receive it?

HOW DOES TENNESSEE SUPPORT SEAD THROUGH **WRAPAROUND SERVICES**?

MULTI-TIERED OR INTEGRATED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT (MTSS) — ALSO KNOWN AS WRAPAROUND SERVICES — PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO RESOURCES TO OVERCOME ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC BARRIERS TO SUCCESS. MTSS are frameworks that districts and schools can use to connect services to students. When schools identify and provide targeted supports to each student, when the health and well-being of students are met, and when efforts are made to ensure students feel they belong, students can better engage in schools.

Bright spots

Tennessee stands out as doing positive work in wraparound services by…

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that encourage schools to adopt MTSS

- Setting policies and providing resources that…

  - Provide guidance for districts and schools to develop and fund evidence-based MTSS

  - Provide health and housing support, including oral health supports to students and information for supporting students experiencing homelessness

  - Require early childhood education programs to provide meals or snacks that meet nutrition guidelines

- Collecting and publicly reporting data that requires districts and schools to conduct both student-level and school-level data

How to improve

Tennessee still has much to improve, however, and should prioritize…

- Setting clear and equity-centered goals that explicitly prioritize developing and implementing multi-tiered systems for students with the highest needs

- Setting policies and provide resources that…

  - Ensures the Children's Cabinet has a clear initiative of advancing race equity

  - Expressly authorize school districts to bill for services delivered to all Medicaid-enrolled students without requiring services to be documented in an IEP or IFSP

  - Increase access to nutrition by requiring all schools to participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, and adopting a policy to prevent lunch-shaming

  - Include a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that explicitly names groups of students most likely to be bullied and harassed

  - Support transgender K-12 students in participating in athletics and using facilities based on gender identity

  - Require districts to monitor the progress and impacts of multi-tiered or integrated support systems for continuous improvement, including using student data to inform decisions

  - Mandate school counseling for all grades with no greater than the 250:1 student-to-school counselor ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association

Key questions for district leaders:

Does each student who needs targeted social-emotional support receive it?

Does each student who needs targeted physical and mental health supports receive it?

Does each student who needs targeted family support receive it?