



TENNESSEE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE Education Call To Action

Future Economic Growth Depends On Improving Our Education System

The Tennessee Business Roundtable and other members of the state's business community strongly believe that the State of Tennessee must take bold steps to accelerate progress to improve our public education systems. We believe that there is an education crisis. Although Governor Bredesen's administration has shown solid leadership in supporting education, it is a strong fact that Tennessee is continuing to fall behind in education.

WE BELIEVE THE FUTURE OF TENNESSEE'S ECONOMY IS DIRECTLY TIED TO THE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE OF OUR PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS. WITHOUT A BETTER-EDUCATED WORKFORCE WE CANNOT EXPECT TO ATTRACT THE HIGH TECH INDUSTRIES OF TOMORROW.

Tennessee can no longer afford to receive Ds and Fs in education. Except for a few select community systems, the overall impression of Tennessee schools has fallen to an unacceptable level.

Businesses throughout the state must expand their partnerships and alliances with public education in order to accelerate the improvement of our public school system. The business community cannot afford to standby and criticize. Business and parents must become a major part of the solution.

The Tennessee Business Roundtable is challenging all members of the business community to join them in partnering with the Governor, The General Assembly and the educational leadership in Tennessee to seek major changes in our education systems:

- 1) Increase the college graduation rate with particular emphasis on providing more Pre K-12 teachers & math and science professionals.
 - a) Request that the State's educational leadership --including the State Board of Education, the Board of Regents, The Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and all Boards of Trustees of our Universities develop and implement a plan to address this issue immediately.
 - b) Ask the Legislature to provide new and innovative ways to encourage businesses to establish scholarships for students who graduate in math and science or to establish funds to provide monetary incentives for math and science teachers.
 - c) Expand the concept of "The Distinguished Scientist in the Classroom" program across the entire state.
 - d) Ask the business community to establish a minimum of 200 new college scholarships for math and science students.
 - e) Request Oak Ridge National Laboratory to take a key and highly visible role to help Tennessee graduate more math and science professionals.

- 2) Provide all students with a solid foundation at an early age.
 - a) Request the Legislature adopt a specific schedule for implementing a universal Pre-K Program.
 - b) Challenge local school districts to put in place programs to assure all students can read at grade level by third grade.

- 3) Increase the expectations and requirements for our students and schools.
 - a) Implement a planned and demanding schedule for increasing the passing scores for the high school Gateway Tests.
 - b) Ask the Tennessee State School Board to make four years of math in high school a requirement for an academic diploma.
 - c) Request the Legislature establish a requirement that awardees of a lottery scholarship have passing grades in all academic core subjects.
 - d) Include a strong educational component in the Three Star Community program as well as a requirement that communities implement the Tennessee Scholars Program, establish an effective P-16 Council, and conduct community science fairs.

- 4) Increase the effectiveness and professional stature of all teachers.
 - a) Set a goal of establishing a world-class professional development program for all Pre K-12 teachers within five years.
 - b) Expand the network of the Teacher Professional Development Centers.
 - c) Establish innovative ways to deliver professional development courses within individual schools & school districts.
 - d) Challenge all businesses and parents across the state to partner with their local schools to establish programs to support their teachers as professionals and to aid in their professional development.