



KCS | KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

STRATEGIC PLAN

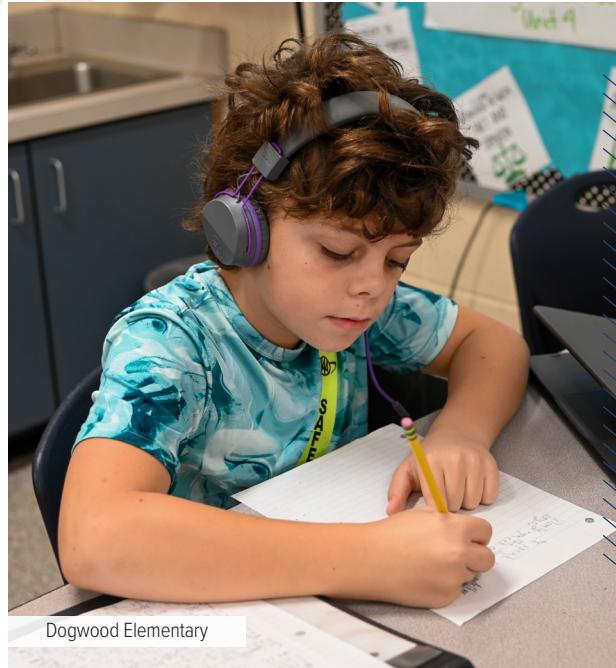
2030: EVERY STUDENT *FUTURE READY*



Fulton High



Adrian Burnett Elementary



Dogwood Elementary



Corryton Elementary



Powell High



Green Magnet Academy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message From The Superintendent..... 5
Introduction..... 6
Strategic Planning Process..... 8
 Stakeholder Engagement..... 10
 Data Analysis..... 12
 KCS Values..... 14
Strategic Plan Goals & Objectives..... 16
 Strategic Planning Framework..... 18
 Excellence In Foundational Skills..... 20
 Great Educators In Every School..... 22
 Career Empowerment & Preparation..... 24
 Success For Every Student..... 26
 Communication & Engagement..... 28
 The KCS Commitment..... 30
Glossary..... 32

As you read the Strategic Plan, refer to the Glossary at the end of this publication for definitions of education-related terms.



LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS REPORT

[KNOXSCHOOLS.ORG/STRATEGICPLAN](https://knoxschools.org/strategicplan)

2030: Every Student *Future Ready*

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

On behalf of the Knox County Board of Education and Knox County Schools, I am proud to present the **2030 Strategic Plan: Every Student Future Ready**.

This plan is intentionally ambitious. The goals and objectives established here are bold, forward-thinking, and will challenge us to continue to improve—because that is what our students deserve. The *2030 Strategic Plan* envisions a future in which KCS is the undisputed leader in public education: the first choice for families, the right choice for community investments, and the best choice for students.

Within these pages, you will find a renewed commitment to our four priorities: **Excellence in Foundational Skills**, **Great Educators in Every School**, **Career Empowerment and Preparation**, and **Success for Every Student**. Months of planning and engagement with families, staff, and community members confirmed that this work is the right work.

As a result, you will see a continued emphasis on reading and math over the next five years, as well as an enhanced focus on college and career exposure through our 865 Academies and on the retention, development, and recruitment of high-quality educators. You will also notice new areas of focus intentionally aligned to the four priorities. These include investments in innovative school programming throughout the district, leveraging technology to maximize time for high-impact work, reimagining middle school, and implementing a student-centered plan to improve special education outcomes.

This is not easy work. The goals and objectives within the *2030 Strategic Plan* are more than benchmarks. They are a bold call to action. Meeting these targets will take courage, creativity, and an unrelenting commitment to excellence. I am confident that our team is up to the challenge, but we cannot do this work alone.

I want to thank the more than 10,000 stakeholders—families, staff, and community members—who engaged in the development of this plan. We will need your continued support, and the support of the entire Knox County community, in the years to come.

The future of Knox County begins in our classrooms, and our charge is clear: **every student future ready**. That is our promise, and our purpose. Together, I am confident we will not only build a stronger school system—we will shape the future of East Tennessee.



Dr. Jon Rysewyk
Superintendent



INTRODUCTION

One of the largest public school districts in the southeast, Knox County Schools (KCS) is charged with preparing approximately **60,000 students** for life after graduation. The *2030 Strategic Plan* converts that responsibility into ambitious, actionable objectives for the next five years.

Focused on graduating **EVERY STUDENT FUTURE READY**, the *2030 Strategic Plan* is anchored in the district’s four core priorities: **Excellence in Foundational Skills**, **Great Educators in Every School**, **Career Empowerment and Preparation**, and **Success for Every Student**.

Approximately 10,000 educators, families, and community members engaged in the development of the *2030 Strategic Plan* over a span of nine months. The goals and objectives embedded within this plan are a reflection of the insights gathered and data analyzed over more than eighty hours of research and evaluation.

APPROXIMATELY
60,000
STUDENTS

9,000+
STAFF

91
SCHOOLS

FIVE REGIONS

Region 1

A. L. Lotts Elementary
Bearden Elementary
Bearden Middle
Bearden High
Blue Grass Elementary
Farragut Primary
Farragut Intermediate
Farragut Middle
Farragut High
Northshore Elementary
Pond Gap Elementary
Rocky Hill Elementary
Sequoyah Elementary
West High
West Hills Elementary
West Valley Middle
West View Elementary

Region 2

Amherst Elementary
Ball Camp Elementary
Cedar Bluff Elementary
Cedar Bluff Middle
Hardin Valley Elementary
Hardin Valley Middle
Hardin Valley Academy
Karns Elementary
Karns Middle
Karns High
Knox County Virtual
Mill Creek Elementary
Norwood Elementary
Northwest Middle
Pleasant Ridge Elementary
Powell Elementary
Powell Middle
Powell High
Ridgedale
West Haven Elementary

Region 3

Bonny Kate Elementary
Career Magnet Academy
Carter Elementary
Carter Middle
Carter High
Chilhowee Intermediate
Dogwood Elementary
Dr. Paul L. Kelley Volunteer Academy
East Knox Elementary
Gap Creek Elementary
L&N STEM Academy
Mooreland Heights Elementary
Mount Olive Elementary
New Hopewell Elementary
South Knox Elementary
Sunnyview Primary
South-Doyle Middle
South-Doyle High

Region 4

Adrian Burnett Elementary
Brickey-McCloud Elementary
Central High
Copper Ridge Elementary
Corryton Elementary
Fountain City Elementary
Gibbs Elementary
Gibbs Middle
Gibbs High
Gresham Middle
Halls Elementary
Halls Middle
Halls High
Inskip Elementary
K.A.E.C.
Richard Yoakley
Ritta Elementary
Shannondale Elementary
Sterchi Elementary

Region 5

Austin-East Magnet High
Beaumont Magnet Academy
Belle Morris Elementary
Christenberry Elementary
Fulton High
Green Magnet Academy
Holston Middle
Lonsdale Elementary
Maynard Elementary
Sarah Moore Greene Magnet Academy
Spring Hill Elementary
Vine Magnet Middle
Whittle Springs Middle

Preschool

Cedar Bluff Preschool
Fair Garden Family Center
Fort Sanders Educational Development Center
Karns Preschool

KCS spans more than **90 school campuses** across **508 square miles** of rural, urban, and suburban communities. As a district, KCS is made up of five organizational divisions, five school regions, and more than **9,000 dedicated employees**.

Effective implementation of the *2030 Strategic Plan* will require a concerted effort across the district and will rely on the support of the Greater Knox County community.

FIVE DIVISIONS



DR. KEITH WILSON
Assistant Superintendent
of Academics

The **Academics Division** cultivates strong school and classroom leadership through intentional professional development and regionalized instructional support to equip every student from preschool through high school with the skills, experiences, and opportunities needed to excel in and beyond the classroom.



JENNIFER HEMMELGARN
Assistant Superintendent
of Business & Talent

The **Business & Talent Division** retains, attracts, and develops the highly talented and diverse workforce of KCS through innovative training, support, and recruitment and by effectively and efficiently managing and safeguarding public funds with integrity and transparency for the benefit of KCS students and families.



DR. GARFIELD ADAMS
Assistant Superintendent
of Operations

The **Operations Division** maintains safe, healthy, and engaging learning environments for all students by equipping every school with infrastructural and operational support needed to promote and serve effective classroom instruction.



KORI LAUTNER
Assistant Superintendent
of Strategy

The **Strategy Division** simplifies complex challenges by building clear and coherent systems and structures to enhance communication, increase meaningful districtwide engagement, and improve data-driven decision-making.



DR. ANDREW BROWN
Assistant Superintendent
of Student Success

The **Student Success Division** creates accessible and effective learning environments for all students through the implementation of intentional and individualized instruction, services, interventions, and supports.

DEPARTMENTS

Academic Supports
College & Career Readiness
School Regions
Teaching & Learning

DEPARTMENTS

Benefits & Employee Relations
Finance
Staffing & Compensation
Talent Acquisition

DEPARTMENTS

Asset Management
Child Nutrition
Facilities & New Construction
Information Technology
Maintenance & Operations
Security
Transportation

DEPARTMENTS

Creative Services
Impact & Analytics
Public Affairs
Student & Family Supports

DEPARTMENTS

School Culture
Special Education
Student Discipline
Student Supports

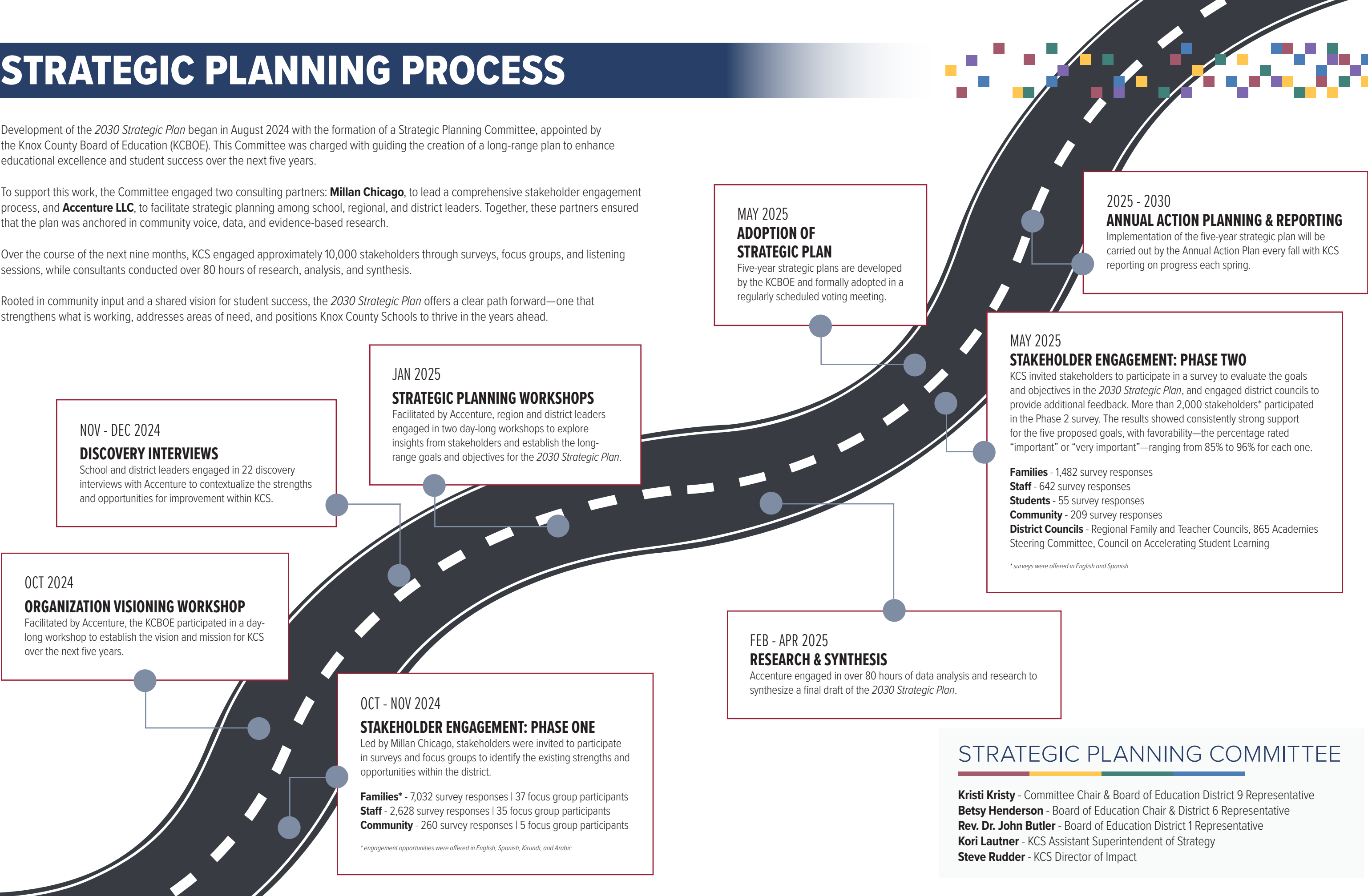
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Development of the *2030 Strategic Plan* began in August 2024 with the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee, appointed by the Knox County Board of Education (KCBOE). This Committee was charged with guiding the creation of a long-range plan to enhance educational excellence and student success over the next five years.

To support this work, the Committee engaged two consulting partners: **Millan Chicago**, to lead a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, and **Accenture LLC**, to facilitate strategic planning among school, regional, and district leaders. Together, these partners ensured that the plan was anchored in community voice, data, and evidence-based research.

Over the course of the next nine months, KCS engaged approximately 10,000 stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions, while consultants conducted over 80 hours of research, analysis, and synthesis.

Rooted in community input and a shared vision for student success, the *2030 Strategic Plan* offers a clear path forward—one that strengthens what is working, addresses areas of need, and positions Knox County Schools to thrive in the years ahead.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

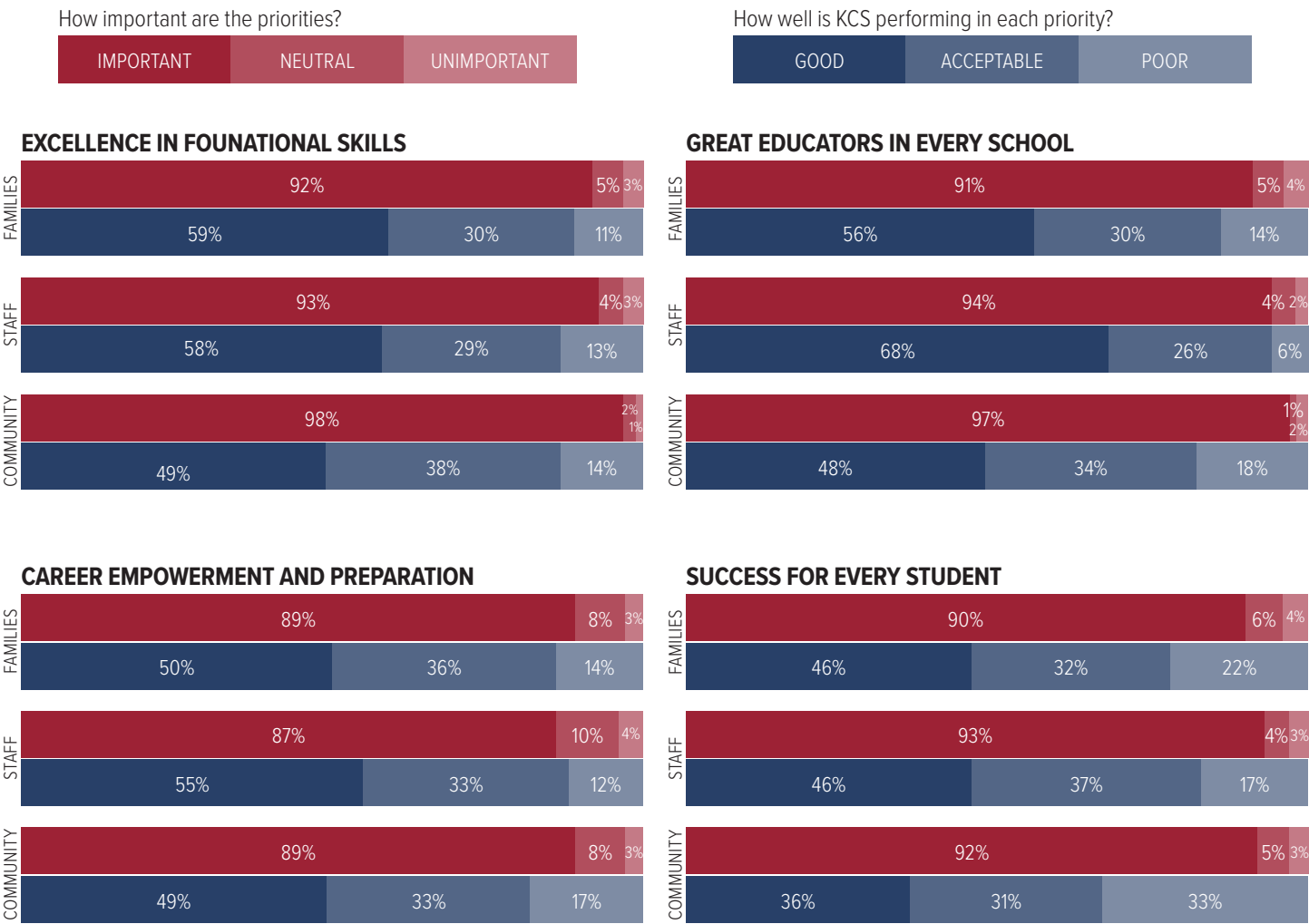
Development of the *2030 Strategic Plan* began in the Fall of 2024 with a series of surveys and focus group opportunities open to Knox County educators, families, and community members. Over the next nine months, approximately 10,000 stakeholders engaged in the strategic planning process. The insights provided were instrumental in shaping the goals and objectives embedded in the *2030 Strategic Plan*.

The first phase of stakeholder engagement was led by Millan Chicago and focused on identifying strengths to reinforce in the strategic plan, as well as opportunities for improvement. Three key findings emerged as a result of this work.

KEY FINDINGS

1 KCS priorities are focused on the right work.

KCS families, staff, and community members identified each of the district’s four core priorities as “important.” In focus groups, participants noted that focus on the four priorities has created alignment throughout KCS. When asked how well KCS was performing in each priority, stakeholders highlighted meaningful opportunities to improve in each area.*

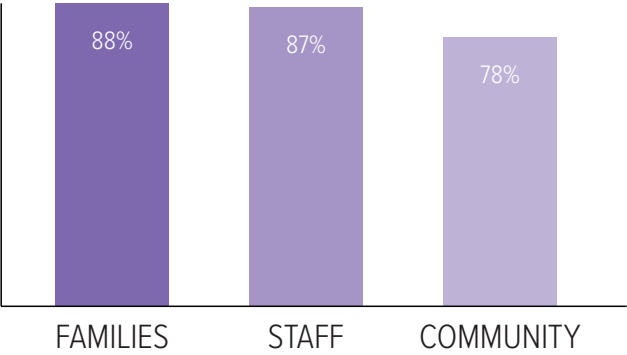


* results were rounded to the nearest whole percentage

2 Stakeholders feel informed by KCS.

Families, staff, and community members consistently reported feeling informed by KCS (88% of families, 87% of staff, and 78% of community members).

This suggests communication systems exist and are working, which will enable KCS to focus future communication efforts on relaying relevant information intentionally and meaningfully.



Survey findings also identified opportunities to improve communication regarding key district initiatives like the 865 Academies.

While 92% of families indicated that it is important for students to be supported by a consistent team of teachers, an assigned administrator, and a dedicated counselor, only 26% felt that the 865 Academies are effectively preparing students for life after graduation.

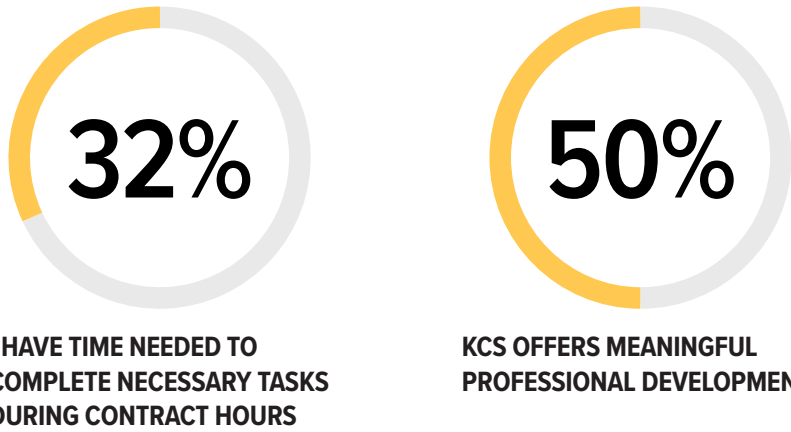
This gap suggests limited awareness or understanding of the 865 Academies model, which is designed around small learning communities led by an assistant principal and supported by a dedicated counselor.

Notably, only 42% of families reported being familiar with the 865 Academies. These results indicate that, despite a general sense among stakeholders of being informed, there remains a clear need to enhance communication and increase awareness of this key district initiative.

Metric	Percentage
Important for student support	92%
Effectively preparing for life after graduation	26%

3 KCS Staff desire more time for high-impact work.

When asked, 32% of staff reported they felt they had adequate time to complete tasks during contract hours. Half of all staff surveyed also desired more meaningful professional development opportunities.



These responses identify an opportunity to explore technology, tools, and scheduling to give meaningful time back to educators. It also highlights the need for an intentional focus on professional development in the *2030 Strategic Plan*.

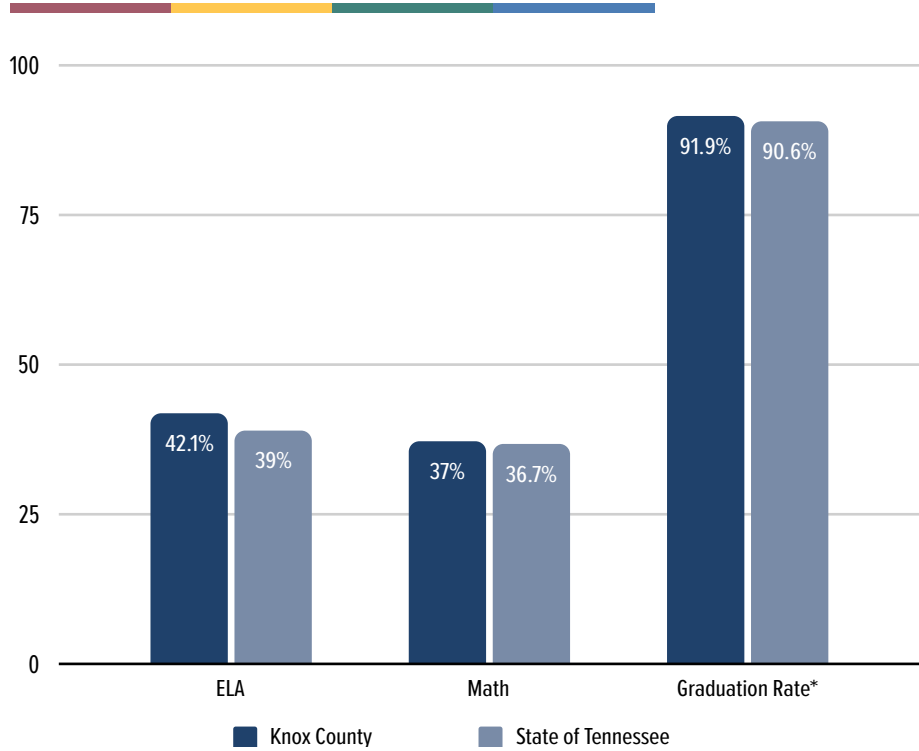
DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a critical step in the strategic planning process. Benchmarking key data points, such as reading and math achievement, creates a baseline—or starting point—that will allow KCS to monitor and report on year-over-year progress.

Comparing KCS baselines to other similar districts also provides valuable context for long-range planning. These comparisons identify where KCS is advancing compared to districts with similar resources and student demographics; they also identify opportunities for enhanced focus and improvement.



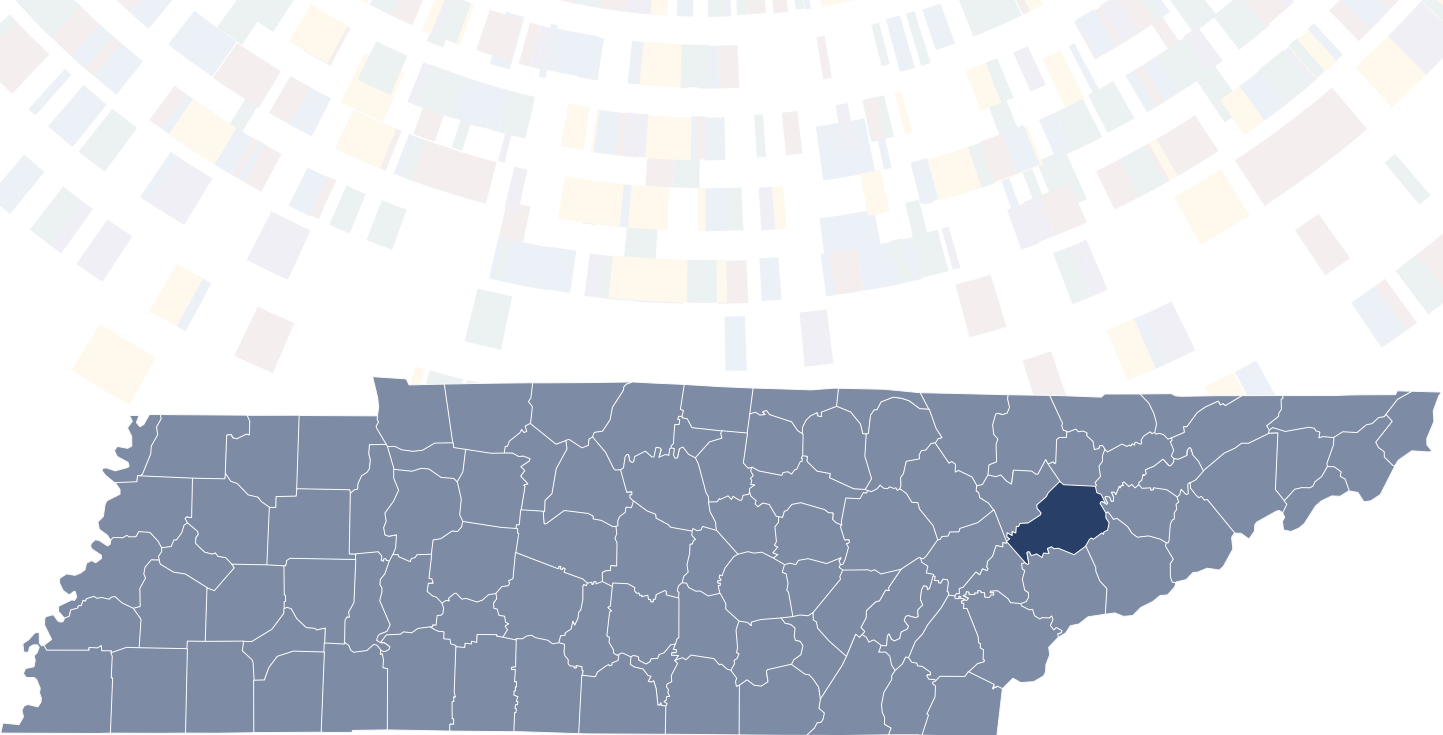
STUDENT OUTCOMES



In 2024-25, KCS outpaced state averages in elementary reading and math proficiency, as well as high school graduation rates.

KCS also generally outperformed surrounding counties in reading and math proficiency. However, when compared to districts of similar size and state funding levels, the data revealed opportunities for improvement, particularly with regard to high school graduation rates.

*Graduation rates for comparison districts generally lag a year behind academic proficiency. For the 2023-24 school year, 12 of the 17 comparison districts graduated students at a higher rate than KCS. Last year (2024-25), the KCS graduation rate increased to 93%, a testament to the work being done in the 865 Academies.



SURROUNDING COUNTIES

Districts that are geographically adjacent to KCS

	ELA	Math	Grad Rate
Blount	40.7%	36.2%	94.1%
Anderson	36.3%	34.1%	95.1%
Loudon	40.8%	43.1%	96%
Union	22.6%	18.3%	89.9%
Jefferson	40.2%	36%	95.3%
Knox	42.1%	37%	91.9%

FUNDING

Districts that receive comparable state government funding through the TISA (Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement) formula

	ELA	Math	Grad Rate
Shelby	23.7%	18.7%	81.5%
Davidson	30.5%	29.3%	81.2%
Hamilton	39%	36.6%	92.2%
Rutherford	47.3%	44.3%	96.2%
Williamson	69.7%	70.3%	97.8%
Knox	42.1%	37%	91.9%

SIZE

Districts with student enrollment numbers similar to KCS

	ELA	Math	Grad Rate
Rutherford	47.3%	44.3%	96.2%
Hamilton	39%	36.6%	92.2%
Williamson	69.7%	70.3%	97.8%
Montgomery	41%	34.8%	92.3%
Sumner	48.5%	52.3%	97.6%
Knox	42.1%	37%	91.9%

PER PUPIL SPENDING

Districts with per pupil spending rates comparable to KCS, determined by total General Purpose Expenditures divided by student enrollment

	ELA	Math	Grad Rate
Bartlett	49.9%	48.3%	95.2%
Fentress	35.8%	34.2%	99%
Weakley	46.2%	43.9%	96.6%
Giles	33.3%	32.9%	92.7%
Cannon	34.8%	17.9%	88.1%
Knox	42.1%	37%	91.9%

KCS VALUES

On October 25, 2024, consultants from Accenture LLC led the Knox County Board of Education in an organizational missioning and visioning workshop. At the workshop, Board members and KCS staff reflected on findings from the stakeholder engagement phase of the strategic planning process alongside the unique value proposition of KCS—both within the county and across the region.

As a result of that work, the KCS mission and vision were revised to reflect the next phase of the district’s evolution and a renewed commitment to excellence.

Our Mission

is to prepare students for life by providing a **high-quality** education that is **accessible, meaningful, and future-focused**.

Education that is inclusive and accessible to all students

Creating an environment that focuses on the individual student’s aptitude and goals

Preparing students for life-long success and contributing to the future of Knox County

Providing access to evidence-based materials and best-in-class teachers

Our Vision

is to be the **cornerstone of education** in Knox County, **empowering students** to grow their talents, strengths, and skills to **build a stronger community**.

Equipping students with meaningful and intentional opportunities to explore their aptitudes and interests

Preparing future generations to contribute to and invest in their community

Be the choice provider of quality education in Knox County

Building on a strong consensus from stakeholders that the district’s four priorities had already added value and increased alignment across KCS, the Board of Education made the strategic decision to anchor the *2030 Strategic Plan* in these same priorities. This continued focus on the four priorities will propel existing work forward while creating new opportunities to deepen the district’s commitment to these core tenets.

Our Priorities

EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Early literacy and middle school math are **foundational to a student’s academic and lifelong success**. By preparing students to read proficiently by 3rd grade and to reach or surpass proficiency in Algebra I by 9th grade, KCS is **equipping every student with the skills needed to succeed in and beyond the classroom**.



GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL

Great educators are core to the mission of KCS. By **investing in meaningful professional development and growth opportunities** and pursuing **innovative strategies to retain and recruit high-quality educators**, KCS is positioning great educators in every classroom.



CAREER EMPOWERMENT & PREPARATION

KCS is committed to preparing students for **life after graduation**. By providing students with **early and meaningful opportunities to explore colleges and careers**, we are empowering students to approach their future with confidence, prepared for the 3 E’s: *enrollment, enlistment, or employment*.



SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

Every student is unique. At KCS, we recognize the talents, needs, personalities, and ambitions of our students by providing the **individualized services, targeted interventions, and meaningful resources and supports** needed to **achieve success**—no matter their zip code, background, or financial situation.



STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2030

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

EVERY STUDENT *FUTURE READY*

Following months of stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and research, KCS has identified five ambitious, achievable goals to advance student outcomes over the next five years and make a lasting impact on future generations of Knox County students.

Goals are aligned to the district’s four core priorities—**Excellence in Foundational Skills**, **Great Educators in Every School**, **Career Empowerment and Preparation**, and **Success for Every Student**—as well as a fifth area of focus: **Communication and Engagement**.

These goals reflect the needs and aspirations of KCS students, educators, families, and community members.

2030 COMMITMENT

- EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS**
Students will be regionally and nationally competitive in reading and math proficiency.
- GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL**
Every educator will be equipped with consistent resources, training, and support to enhance instruction.
- CAREER EMPOWERMENT & PREPARATION**
Students will be confident in their plans for life after graduation by 11th grade and will graduate ready for enrollment, enlistment, or employment.
- SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT**
Every classroom will be equipped with state-of-the-art, evidence-based strategies to accelerate student learning.
- COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT**
KCS will meaningfully and intentionally engage and communicate with stakeholders to enhance the student experience.

PLAN LAYOUT

The *2030 Strategic Plan* is organized into five sections: *Excellence in Foundational Skills*, *Great Educators in Every School*, *Career Empowerment and Preparation*, *Success for Every Student*, and *Communication and Engagement*. Each section contains one **goal**, three **objectives**, and three **key actions**.

Goal
long-range
vision for
success

Objective
specific, measurable steps
to forward each goal

Key Actions
the critical
work KCS will
engage in to
accomplish
the objective

EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

BY 2030

Students will be regionally and nationally competitive in reading and math proficiency.

“Without foundational skills, future success will not happen. We’re not there yet, so we need to remain focused.”
Region 4 Teacher Council





“This is the goal. Our children cannot progress in school or life really without excellence in foundational skills.”
Region 3 Family Council

OBJECTIVE 1A

Increase third grade reading proficiency year over year.
Being proficient in reading by third grade is a key indicator of lifelong success. Students who are reading on grade level by third grade are four times more likely to graduate from high school. KCS is committed to building a strong literacy foundation for every student through the use of high-quality instructional materials (HQM), Instructional Practice Guides (IPGs), targeted interventions, meaningful teacher training, and intentional vertical planning; educators can strengthen content knowledge and ensure curriculum coherence across grade levels.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

1. Implement a three-year strategic plan to increase literacy outcomes.
2. Conduct a Literacy Landscape Review to evaluate progress.
3. Meet the literacy goals established in the Region 5 Way.

OBJECTIVE 1B

Increase eighth grade math proficiency year over year.
Achieving eighth grade math proficiency is vital for preparing students for success in Algebra I, a gateway course critical for upper-level science and math classes. By focusing on high-quality instructional materials (HQM), Instructional Practice Guides (IPGs), targeted interventions, meaningful teacher training, and intentional vertical planning, educators can strengthen content knowledge and ensure curriculum coherence across grade levels.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive middle school math improvement strategy.
2. Establish and implement a long-range plan for Algebra 1 professional development.
3. Meet the math goals established in the Region 5 Way.

OBJECTIVE 1C

Improve the quality and consistency of student learning environments.
Consistent learning environments create stability and predictability for students, families, and staff, ensuring that learners can build skills and knowledge without unnecessary disruptions or uncertainties. By developing and implementing a comprehensive Instructional Framework, KCS plans to align teaching and learning strategies to ensure all students receive a high-quality education from classroom to classroom.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

1. Identify, implement, and align strategies to maximize time for foundational skill building to increase early literacy and math proficiency.
2. Collaborate across divisions and departments to streamline school-level expectations as they relate to instruction and academic and behavioral supports.
3. Fully implement a comprehensive Instructional Framework.

20

Knox County Schools 2030 Strategic Plan 21

STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The *2030 Strategic Plan* outlines the goals and objectives of the district for the next five years. The KCS Strategic Planning Framework converts those goals and objectives into intentional, actionable steps to ensure every school, department, and district division are engaged in the work needed to deliver on the KCS Commitment for 2030.

Objectives established in the *2030 Strategic Plan* will be carried into the Annual Action Plan (AAP) as measurable or milestone objectives. This allows KCS to set annual targets based on the prior year’s progress, which ensures objectives are ambitious, relevant, and realistic year over year.

Meanwhile, key actions highlighted in the *2030 Strategic Plan* serve as a snapshot of the strategies KCS anticipates leveraging in each AAP over the next five years to accomplish its goals.

FROM PLAN TO ACTION

Objectives

STRATEGIC PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1A

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Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Implement a 3-year strategic plan to increase literacy outcomes.
- 2 Conduct a Literacy Landscape Review to evaluate progress.
- 3 Meet the literacy goals established in the Region 5 Way.

Key Actions

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Objective: Increase third grade reading proficiency year over year.

Actions	2024-2025	2025-2026	Change	Met
Increase third grade reading proficiency by 1.8%	--	--	--	--
Implement Year One of the Literacy Strategic Plan	--	--	--	--
Accomplish Year Three objectives in the Region 5 Strategic Plan	--	--	--	--

Objective: Increase eighth grade math proficiency year over year.

Actions	2024-2025	2025-2026	Change	Met
Develop and implement a comprehensive middle school math improvement strategy	--	--	--	--
Establish and implement a long-range plan for Algebra 1 professional development	--	--	--	--

Approved by the Knox County Board of Education each Fall, the AAP serves as the district’s roadmap for the year. All subsequent plans, from division-level operational plans to individual school improvement plans, are designed to execute on the actions formalized in the AAP.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Planning begins at the district level with a five-year strategic plan. The five-year strategic plan casts a long-term vision of success for KCS and is developed by the Knox County Board of Education.

SUPERINTENDENT

The Annual Action Plan is a one-year roadmap to accelerate student learning and increase academic outcomes. This plan outlines a series of measurable and milestone objectives for a given school year.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS

Operational Plans detail the major initiative-level work that needs to occur to ensure the district is on-track to meet its established one-year and five-year objectives.

DEPARTMENT LEADERS

Tactical plans are one-year development plans that detail the work each department must engage in to ensure systems and structures are in place to meet the objectives of their division.

REGIONAL TEAMS

The Local Education Agency (LEA) plan outlines district-level improvement goals and details specific improvement strategies that the district office will engage in to deploy support for schools and accelerate learning in the classroom.

PRINCIPALS

School improvement plans are created annually by school leaders. Principals use regional goals and district support strategies to craft plans aimed at closing achievement gaps, accelerating learning, and improving academic outcomes.



EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

BY 2030

Students will be regionally and nationally competitive in reading and math proficiency.

“

Without foundational skills, future success will not happen. We’re not there yet, so we need to remain focused.

Region 4 Teacher Council



Christenberry Elementary



Cedar Bluff Elementary

“

This is the goal. Our children cannot progress in school or life really without excellence in foundational skills.

Region 3 Family Council

OBJECTIVE 1A

Increase third grade reading proficiency year over year.
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- Over the next five years, KCS will:**
- 1 Implement a three-year strategic plan to increase literacy outcomes.
 - 2 Conduct a Literacy Landscape Review to evaluate progress.
 - 3 Meet the literacy goals established in the *Region 5 Way*.

OBJECTIVE 1B

Increase eighth grade math proficiency year over year.
Achieving eighth grade math proficiency is vital for preparing students for success in Algebra 1, a gateway course critical for upper-level science and math classes. By focusing on high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), Instructional Practice Guides (IPGs), targeted interventions, meaningful teacher training, and intentional vertical planning, educators can strengthen content knowledge and ensure curriculum coherence across grade levels.

- Over the next five years, KCS will:**
- 1 Develop and implement a comprehensive middle school math improvement strategy.
 - 2 Establish and implement a long-range plan for Algebra 1 professional development.
 - 3 Meet the math goals established in the *Region 5 Way*.

OBJECTIVE 1C

Improve the quality and consistency of student learning environments.
Consistent learning environments create stability and predictability for students, families, and staff, ensuring that learners can build skills and knowledge without unnecessary disruptions or uncertainties. By developing and implementing a comprehensive instructional framework, KCS plans to align teaching and learning strategies to ensure all students receive a high-quality education from classroom to classroom.

- Over the next five years, KCS will:**
- 1 Identify, implement, and align strategies to maximize time for foundational skill building to increase early literacy and math proficiency.
 - 2 Collaborate across divisions and departments to streamline school-level expectations as they relate to instruction and academic and behavioral supports.
 - 3 Fully implement a comprehensive Instructional Framework.

GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL

BY 2030

Every educator will be equipped with consistent resources, training, and support to enhance instruction.



Green Magnet Academy

“

Educators with great resources, training, and support are better equipped to provide excellent education.

Region 4 Teacher Council

“

We need quality educators properly equipped to serve students and their families.

Region 5 Family Council



Farragut Primary

OBJECTIVE 2A

Advance the Teach Knox initiative for educator recruitment and retention.

Teach Knox is the district’s comprehensive talent strategy aimed at aligning all professional and leadership development, recruitment, and retention efforts around a clear vision for Great Educators. Implementation of the Teach Knox initiative will ultimately empower principals to make strategic staffing decisions to meet the needs of their school, increase the number of high-quality educators in KCS classrooms, and increase the percent of educators who report feeling supported and equipped to excel in their profession.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Fully implement the Teach Knox initiative across the district.
- 2 Meet the educator retention and recruitment goals in the *Region 5 Way*.
- 3 Develop a leadership development series that strengthens principals’ capacity in building-level leadership, instructional management, and implementing effective systems and structures.

OBJECTIVE 2B

Create and implement a professional development framework focused on continuous growth and student outcomes.

Research consistently shows that students taught by high-quality educators perform better academically, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to pursue higher education. Creating and implementing a professional development framework staked in best practices and continuous educator feedback will empower educators to grow their expertise in meaningful and intentional ways.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Establish a data-sharing framework to ensure intentional and relevant data points are effectively and consistently embedded in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and districtwide professional development opportunities.
- 2 Strengthen structures for comprehensive multi-tiered systems of supports for all students.
- 3 Identify and develop rising leaders by creating engaging and intentional opportunities in and beyond schools.

OBJECTIVE 2C

Leverage technology and automation to increase time for high-impact work, enhance recruitment, and increase retention.

When surveyed, only 32% of KCS staff reported having time to complete necessary tasks during work hours. Leveraging technology and automation can shelter time for educators, principals, and district leaders to focus on the high-impact tasks that accelerate learning for students and increase satisfaction in the workplace.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Identify strategic opportunities for automating routine processes.
- 2 Develop clear protocols for establishing and updating guardrails for continuously evolving technology usage.
- 3 Empower educators to implement time-saving technology through differentiated supports for specific job functions.

CAREER EMPOWERMENT & PREPARATION

BY 2030

Students will be confident in their plans for life after graduation by 11th grade and will graduate ready for enrollment, enlistment, or employment.

“

Every student should be confident in what they have learned. They should know and feel they can compete with other students locally and nationally.

Region 5 Family Council



“

Students need to be well-rounded and should graduate having a strong concept of what post-graduation plans they will have.

Region 2 Teacher Council

OBJECTIVE 3A

Align high school pathways and guaranteed experiences to the workforce and student aptitude.

The 865 Academies empower KCS students to graduate with confidence in their next steps in life. Aligning guaranteed experiences to student aptitudes and workforce needs will provide meaningful learning opportunities to create connections between the classroom and the workforce, inspiring students to imagine—and strive for—ambitious, attainable futures for themselves.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Consistently examine and evaluate pathways for alignment to projected high-wage, high-demand workforce needs.
- 2 Identify the characteristics of fully-engaged business, military, and postsecondary partners and establish year-over-year benchmarks for school-level engagement rates.
- 3 Meet established targets for participation in student guaranteed experiences outlined in the 865 Academies Plan.

OBJECTIVE 3B

Graduate 85% of students ready for enrollment, enlistment, or employment.

Success after graduation looks different for every student. Through small learning communities and intentional counseling, KCS is committed to equipping students with knowledge, skills, and experiences needed for postsecondary enrollment, enlistment in the military, or employment in a high-wage, high-demand career after graduation.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Create personalized student roadmaps that align coursework to career aspirations through intentional counseling and advising services.
- 2 Develop a process for measuring the employment-going rate for high school graduates.
- 3 Meet the ready graduate goals in the Region 5 Way.

OBJECTIVE 3C

Expand innovative school programming options.

While the majority of students thrive in a traditional school setting, every learner is unique. Innovative programming opportunities such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and arts-focused instruction, early college models, and advanced academic courses provide students and families with more choice in public education and broaden KCS offerings to meet the growing interest and demand for innovation.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Increase the number of innovative schools of choice across the district.
- 2 Audit the regional distribution of available innovative programming and intentionally expand offerings accordingly.
- 3 Expand advanced academic offerings including dual enrollment, AP, IB, Cambridge, and industry certifications based on student interests and workforce needs.

SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT



BY 2030

Every classroom will be equipped with state-of-the-art, evidence-based strategies to accelerate student learning.



“

Students deserve every opportunity to learn in the most effective and efficient way.

Region 1 Family Council

“

Every child deserves a fighting chance in life, and a strong education is the starting point.

Region 3 Family Council



OBJECTIVE 4A

Define the unique role each grade band plays in preparing students for life after graduation.

Every step in a student’s academic journey matters—from early education to high school. Understanding the unique role each grade band plays in preparing students for life after graduation creates clarity and consistency for students, families, and staff. By establishing a clear mission for each grade band, educators will be able to prepare students for every grade in their academic career and families will be better empowered to support their students every step of the way.

- Over the next five years, KCS will:
- 1 Reimagine the middle school experience, clearly defining the purpose of middle grades (6th-8th) in preparing students for graduation and beyond.
 - 2 Develop a mission and vision for every grade band (preschool, elementary, middle, and high) that clearly identifies the responsibility each has as it relates to academic preparation and career exposure.
 - 3 Enhance consistency of policies, procedures, and practices implemented across the district.

OBJECTIVE 4B

Strengthen and streamline academic interventions and services to accelerate student learning.

Intervention is a critical support system for students. By aligning interventions to everyday instruction, educators are able to maximize the potential for student success in the classroom. This requires collaboration across a wide range of educators in every school, including: general education teachers, special education teachers, ELL teachers, RTI instructors, and school leaders. Through increased collaboration and a shared vision for success, KCS will be able to more effectively address the diverse needs of every student.

- Over the next five years, KCS will:
- 1 Develop and implement a framework for instructional coherence, identifying the critical role intervention, special education, and English Learner (EL) services play in enhancing access to Tier 1 instruction.
 - 2 Implement a long-range strategic plan to increase special education outcomes.
 - 3 Scale EL co-teaching to every kindergarten classroom, and increase the number of students exiting ELL instruction before first grade.

OBJECTIVE 4C

Consistently implement and scale systems and structures for comprehensive, whole child support.

Every student deserves a network of support. In a district the size of KCS, students and families also deserve consistent classroom and behavioral expectations—from classroom to classroom and from school to school. By equipping staff with evidence-based practices, enhancing multi-tiered support systems, and removing barriers to Tier 1 instruction, KCS will increase academic outcomes, enhance the consistency of expectations across schools, and support students emotionally and cognitively throughout their educational journey.

- Over the next five years, KCS will:
- 1 Enhance consistency of behavioral expectations and interventions across all classrooms and schools to promote a culture of learning.
 - 2 Leverage Whole Child Support Teams to mitigate obstacles to learning and increase students’ access to Tier 1 instruction.
 - 3 Conduct a comprehensive Alternative School Analysis to identify and implement strategies to meaningfully and effectively serve students in alternative school placements.

COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

BY 2030

KCS will meaningfully and intentionally engage and communicate with stakeholders to enhance the student experience.

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Communication is essential in order for there to be success in the community, and it must be meaningful and relevant.

Region 1 Teacher Council



“

Families seem to be becoming less engaged in their child’s actual education. We must increase academic accountability and build stronger academic relationships with families.

Region 2 Teacher Council

OBJECTIVE 5A

Reimagine communication through the lens of 21st Century needs, leveraging technology to enhance access to information and resources.

Engagement between schools and families has changed significantly over the last two decades, but the addition of new platforms for communication and student information can make it difficult for families to know where to find what matters most. By reimagining communication through a 21st century lens, KCS can better leverage existing technology and tools to reduce barriers, simplify access to essential information, and equip families with resources to support students throughout their education.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Overhaul the KCS website to serve as an effective information-sharing tool for families.
- 2 Launch a FutureReady initiative to engage families in college and career exposure for students.
- 3 Create family-focused resources to enhance access to and engagement with communication and student information platforms such as Aspen, Canvas, and ParentSquare.

OBJECTIVE 5B

Leverage partnerships with community organizations, businesses, postsecondary institutions, and law enforcement agencies to catalyze support for and investment in KCS schools and students.

KCS is uniquely positioned within the Knox County community to prepare every student for life after graduation. While educators equip students with the knowledge and skills students need to thrive in and beyond the classroom, community partners also play a vital role in enhancing the student experience in the form of work-based learning opportunities, wraparound services and supports, and maintain safe, secure learning environments.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Partner with the 865 Academies CEO Champions and Steering Committee to increase the number and intentionality of student guaranteed experiences.
- 2 Work with the Council on Accelerating Student Learning (CASL), Community Schools, and Regional Teacher and Family Councils to generate support for students and schools and inform future-forward work.
- 3 Research and leverage cutting-edge technology, infrastructure, and strategies to enhance campus safety and security.

OBJECTIVE 5C

Maximize district budgets by aligning resources to the four priorities to enhance student outcomes.

As a publicly funded school district, KCS has a responsibility to Knox County taxpayers to maximize every resource in the pursuit of increasing student achievement. By evaluating the return on strategic investments and regularly assessing the condition of district facilities and infrastructure, KCS can maximize and clearly report on the impact of state and local funding on student outcomes.

Over the next five years, KCS will:

- 1 Pilot and implement a model for Return on Investment (ROI) monitoring of strategic improvement investments.
- 2 Use the Comprehensive Facilities Assessment to drive long-term maintenance and Capital Planning projects.
- 3 Increase efficiencies in operational support for schools, including technology, facilities, asset management, human resources, and finances.

THE KCS COMMITMENT



2030:
Every
Student
*Future
Ready*

EXCELLENCE IN FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

GOAL 1

Students will be regionally and nationally competitive in reading and math proficiency.

OBJECTIVE 1A

Increase third grade reading proficiency year over year.

OBJECTIVE 1B

Increase eighth grade math proficiency year over year.

OBJECTIVE 1C

Improve the quality and consistency of student learning environments.



GREAT EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL

GOAL 2

Every educator will be equipped with consistent resources, training, and support to enhance instruction.

OBJECTIVE 2A

Advance the Teach Knox initiative for educator recruitment and retention.

OBJECTIVE 2B

Create and implement a professional development framework focused on continuous growth and student outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 2C

Leverage technology and automation to increase time for high-impact work, enhance recruitment, and increase retention.



CAREER EMPOWERMENT & PREPARATION

GOAL 3

Students will be confident in their plans for life after graduation by 11th grade and will graduate ready for enrollment, enlistment, or employment.

OBJECTIVE 3A

Align high school pathways and guaranteed experiences to the workforce and student aptitude.

OBJECTIVE 3B

Graduate 85% of students ready for enrollment, enlistment, or employment.

OBJECTIVE 3C

Expand innovative school programming options.



SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

GOAL 4

Every classroom will be equipped with state-of-the-art, evidence-based strategies to accelerate student learning.

OBJECTIVE 4A

Define the unique role each grade band plays in preparing students for life after graduation.

OBJECTIVE 4B

Strengthen and streamline academic interventions and services to accelerate student learning.

OBJECTIVE 4C

Consistently implement and scale systems and structures for comprehensive, whole child support.



COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

GOAL 5

KCS will meaningfully and intentionally engage and communicate with stakeholders to enhance the student experience.

OBJECTIVE 5A

Reimagine communication through the lens of 21st Century needs, leveraging technology to enhance access to information and resources.

OBJECTIVE 5B

Leverage partnerships with community organizations, businesses, postsecondary institutions, and law enforcement agencies to catalyze support for and investment in KCS schools and students.

OBJECTIVE 5C

Maximize district budgets by aligning resources to the four priorities to enhance student outcomes.



GLOSSARY

865 Academies: A transformative initiative by KCS that organizes high schools into career-themed academies, giving students real-world learning experiences and helping them prepare for college, careers, or the military.

Advanced Placement (AP): A college-level program that offers rigorous courses and exams, allowing high school students to earn college credit and demonstrate readiness for advanced study.

Annual Action Plan (AAP): A one-year roadmap to accelerate student learning and increase academic outcomes. This plan outlines a series of measurable and milestone objectives for a given school year.

ASPEN: A student information system used by schools to manage and share important student data like grades, attendance, schedules, and records with families, teachers, and administrators.

Cambridge International: An internationally recognized program offering high-quality, flexible curriculum and assessments that promote critical thinking, global perspectives, and academic excellence.

Canvas: An online platform where teachers post assignments, lessons, and grades, and students can access class materials, turn in work, and see their progress—all in one place.

Dual Enrollment: A program that allows high school students to take college-level courses and earn both high school and college credit at the same time.

English Language Learner (ELL): A student whose primary language is not English and who is developing proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.

Guaranteed Experiences: Structured opportunities—such as job shadows, industry tours, career fairs, and capstone projects—provided to all students in the 865 Academies to support career exploration and postsecondary planning.

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM): Standards-aligned, evidence-based resources designed to support rigorous, grade-level learning and improve student outcomes across all classrooms.

Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) Walkthrough: A structured classroom observation process used to monitor and strengthen ELA instruction. Conducted by district and school leaders, these walkthroughs use the IPG tool to collect data on curriculum implementation, calibrate instructional practices, and identify trends to guide professional learning and support.

Instructional Framework: A guide that helps KCS educators plan and deliver high-quality instruction. It outlines shared teaching practices, supports effective decision-making, and ensures all students have access to strong, consistent learning experiences.

International Baccalaureate (IB): A globally recognized program offering a rigorous, inquiry-based curriculum that promotes global citizenship and community service.

Local Educational Agency (LEA): A public authority — usually a school district, charter school, or county office of education — that operates local public schools and is legally responsible for providing elementary and/or secondary education within a defined geographic area.

Operational Plans: Detailed plans developed by KCS Assistant Superintendents that outline key initiatives that guide district progress and ensure alignment with one-year and five-year goals.

ParentSquare: A communication tool schools use to send messages, alerts, and updates to families through email, text, phone, or app—all in one place.

Professional Learning Community (PLC): Teams of educators who regularly collaborate to analyze student data, share effective practices, and plan instruction—all with the goal of improving student learning and outcomes.

Region 5 Way: A five-year action plan developed by and for the Region 5 community. It defines key actions, metrics, and milestones aligned to the district’s four priorities, providing a clear roadmap for progress and accountability.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A multi-tiered system of support used in schools to identify and support students who are struggling with academics or behavior. The RTI process involves:

- **Tier 1:** High-quality instruction and universal screening for all students in the general education classroom.
- **Tier 2:** Targeted interventions for students who need additional support beyond what’s provided in Tier 1.
- **Tier 3:** Intensive, individualized interventions for students who show minimal response to Tier 2 support.

School Improvement Plan (SIP): A strategic, data-driven plan that outlines a school’s goals and the actions it will take to improve student outcomes.

Small Learning Community (SLC): A school structure where students and teachers are grouped into smaller, personalized learning environments—often by grade level or academic interest—to foster stronger relationships, improve engagement, and support student success.

Tactical Plans: One-year development plans that detail the work each department must engage in to ensure systems and structures are in place to meet the objectives of their division.

Teach Knox: A KCS initiative that strengthens teacher recruitment, retention, and development through a proactive, districtwide talent strategy focused on supporting student success.

Whole Child Supports: Services and strategies that address students’ academic, social, emotional, and physical needs to ensure they are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and ready to learn.



South Knox Elementary



Halls High



South-Doyle High



Belle Morris Elementary



L&N STEM Academy



Brickey-McCloud Elementary



Gibbs Elementary



Dogwood Elementary



South-Doyle High



South Knox Elementary

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Be the cornerstone of education in Knox County, empowering students to grow their talents, strengths, and skills to build a stronger community.

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Prepare students for life by providing a high-quality education that is accessible, meaningful, and future-focused.



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