



KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to keep the following considerations in mind when making any changes to legislation:

LOCAL CONTROL

Local boards of education are best equipped and informed to make decisions regarding the needs and challenges of their local schools. The Knox County Board of Education urges legislative bodies and regulatory agencies to seek input from local boards and to determine the full impact on LEAs before acting on proposed legislation, regulations, and guidelines.

CLASSROOM IMPACT

Processes, procedures, reporting, and burdensome data collection should be streamlined and simplified (or eliminated, when possible) to allow more time for teaching and learning. The Knox County Board of Education also urges legislative bodies and regulatory agencies to avoid imposing unfunded mandates on LEAs.

The Knox County Board of Education has identified the following legislative priorities for 2026:

Funding for Preschool Students in the TISA Funding Formula

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to allocate full funding for voluntary preschools, as well as preschool special needs students and the required typical peers, in the TISA funding formula.

Ability to Conduct Lotteries for Educational Purposes

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to enact an amendment to Article XI, Section 5, of the Tennessee Constitution to allow boards of education to conduct lotteries or lottery-type events to obtain funds that will be solely and exclusively used to supplement the educational and extracurricular programs officially recognized and approved by said boards of education.

Academic and Retention Decisions

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to allow the professional staff of each school district to make retention decisions for students in coordination with parents/guardians based on school district information. The Board requests dedicated state funding for kindergarten through 2nd grade literacy supports including tutoring, instructional materials, and summer programming, so 3rd grade retention can be prevented and long-term student outcomes can be improved.

Teacher Evaluation

The Knox County Board of Education embraces evaluations as a critical professional development and instructional improvement tool. The Board urges the General Assembly and State Board to develop guidelines and criteria for teacher evaluation models using local educator input and multiple measures that adequately represent performance and course content, including the use of benchmark assessments as an evaluation component.

Stabilize Federal Funding

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to guarantee funding backfill for any reductions, freezes, or delays in federal K-12 education appropriations, ensuring school districts can plan effectively and avoid budget crises.

Free Education for All Children

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to oppose any proposals requiring school districts to collect or monitor student immigration status, as they create legal risks, add administrative burdens, and distract from teaching and learning. The Board affirms the Tennessee Constitution and Supreme Court rulings guaranteeing a *free* public education for ALL children in Tennessee and opposes any measure that excludes—or seeks to exclude—any child from our schools.

Support for Community Schools

The Knox County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to support initiatives that enable local school districts to establish and expand community schools that integrate academic, health, social, and family support services while engaging parents and caregivers as essential partners in student learning. Knox County has demonstrated the success of this model.