

Tennessee

2016 College- and Career-Readiness Policies and Practices

The Southern Regional Education Board has long emphasized the critical need to strengthen students' readiness to succeed after high school. SREB's recommendations to improve readiness (SREB.org/Readiness) cover standards, assessments, transitional courses, postsecondary placement and remedial education. To support states' efforts, SREB compiled information through interviews of P-16 education agency staff and review of numerous documents to determine state progress as of fall 2016 on the recommendations. This state profile summarizes selected findings for each of the five areas. SREB plans to update this information annually.

Standards

Does the state have statewide college- and career-readiness standards in reading, writing and mathematics? Do K-12 and postsecondary education agree on the same standards?

The Tennessee State Board of Education adopted new academic standards in 2010 and facilitated a standards review process for math and English language arts for implementation in the 2017-18 school year. Until the Board adopts revised standards, the state will use the 2010 standards. The State Board of Education discussed the revised standards in April 2016. After approval, educator training is planned for the 2016-17 school year, and schools will implement the standards statewide during the 2017-18 school year.

Readiness Assessments

How does the state assess high school students' readiness? What are the options for students who do not meet them?

Tennessee State Board of Education rules require districts to administer ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System to 10th grade students. Test results identify students who are not on track to meet college- and career-readiness benchmarks. Since the 2015-16 school year, all students in grades 3 through 11 have been taking TNReady; the TNReady assessments measure the current, approved college- and career-readiness standards. The college- and career-ready benchmark for this assessment was under discussion as of fall 2016. TNReady will align with the new standards, and the state expects that TNReady scores will be used as a measure of readiness for credit-bearing postsecondary work in the future. Public higher education institutions are participating in a review of the assessment frameworks. Students who meet college- and career readiness standards are eligible to earn dual and concurrent credit.

Transitional Courses and Interventions

Does the state require transitional readiness courses or other interventions for students who are not ready to succeed in college-level courses?

Individual school districts decide whether students who do not meet readiness standards must enroll in transitional courses such as Bridge Math or SAILS (Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support) Math. Colleges are piloting SAILS English, a complementary literacy intervention that allows students to earn remediation credit for reading and writing in the senior year of high school. Students who do not achieve a score of 19 on the math component of the ACT-PLAN must take Bridge Math. In 2017-18, SAILS Math will align with TNReady and Tennessee Board of Regents math competencies. Bridge Math, SAILS Math and SAILS English all count for the required fourth year of high school math, and SAILS English carries credit. In SAILS, students take assessments as part of the course. They may elect to take the ACT again after Bridge Math to gain college-ready status. Teachers receive professional development for SAILS.

Postsecondary Placement

How do institutions place a student who is not ready for college-level work? Are the same standards, assessments and qualifying score levels applied statewide or systemwide? Are multiple criteria and measures used in placement decisions?

The Tennessee Board of Regents has systemwide policies for placement standards, assessments and qualifying scores for community college students. The system places degree-seeking students with ACT subject scores below 19 (or concordant Compass, Asset, and SAT scores) in reading or mathematics in learning support. Colleges also recognize statistics and quantitative reasoning scores for math placement and are considering other placement criteria. Students may challenge the postsecondary institution's placement decision by taking the Compass, and colleges may place students in credit-bearing courses based on the Compass score. The ACT and Compass tests do not fully align in content and performance expectations to the junior-year readiness assessments. Institutions apply the same standards, assessments and qualifying scores in determining the readiness of rising seniors and of newly admitted college students.

Institutions within the University of Tennessee System may establish specific placement requirements and placement exam threshold scores at the campus level. Institutions track students for success in learning support, success in their first college-level course after learning support, length of time for each data point, semester-to-semester retention, fall-to-fall retention, completion, and length of time to graduation. National Student Clearinghouse data enable institutions to track students through transfer as well. The University of Tennessee also has job placement data by academic field after graduation.

Automated data collection and tracking allows institutions to monitor the success of placement policies. Literacy performance standards are in system policy and are based on the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards.

Remedial and Developmental Education

Are there state or system policies for remedial and developmental education in colleges? What curricular and support paths are available for students? Is corequisite instruction—an academic course taken in conjunction with another course—required or optional? How do institutions and the state monitor student progress? What evidence is available on the effectiveness of these interventions?

State policy mandates that only community colleges provide remedial and developmental courses, and all Tennessee community colleges offer SAILS math. The Tennessee Board of Regents has taken corequisite delivery to full scale across the system: unprepared students must take learning support as a corequisite alongside gateway courses. Placement content requirements do not vary for initial placement into learning support. However, postsecondary institutions may require STEM majors to take another support course in math that can be used for college-level elective credit, although it does not meet general education requirements.

Reporting accountability systems monitor student progress in alternative instruction options. Some institutions have academic early-alert monitoring systems that identify struggling students. Institutions provide data to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission on the number of full-time and part-time students enrolled in any remedial or developmental course who successfully complete college-level courses in a subsequent semester within three years of their initial enrollment.