

SCORE Report



<http://www.tennesseescore.org/uploads/SCORE%20IR%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

This report highlights five of the highest-performing districts: Alcoa City, Clinton City, Trenton Special School District, Jefferson County, and Claiborne County. This report finds these districts (1) have targeted professional development opportunities for teachers that are embedded within schools and maintained over time (2) invest in training and developing strong school leaders (3) utilize data to improve teaching and learning and (4) provide supplemental services to support their most disadvantaged students.

Looking at value-added scores and cohort progress alone is not enough, as what it takes to increase the achievement of high performing students might be different than what it takes to increase the achievement of low-performing students. One way to do this is to divide districts into quintiles based on their absolute level of achievement and then compare the achievement progress of districts within each quintile. Not only does this control for absolute achievement, but it also partially controls for socioeconomic characteristics, as socioeconomic characteristics are highly correlated with absolute achievement levels. When districts are divided into these quintiles, the districts that made the most progress in each quintile for 2007-08 are Alcoa City (top quintile), Clinton City (second quintile), Trenton Special School District (third quintile), Jefferson County (fourth quintile), and Claiborne County (bottom quintile).

The five high-performing districts examined are extremely diverse. Not only is there one district from each achievement quintile, but the districts also differ significantly in the size of their student populations, their student demographics, and their funding levels. For example, while the smallest district is Clinton with 848 students, the largest district is Jefferson County with 7,366 students.

Despite this great diversity, there were five characteristics that existed in all the high-performing districts but that were absent in the lowest-performing districts. First, the high performing districts all have targeted professional development opportunities for teachers that are embedded within schools and maintained over time. Jefferson's County's professional development strategy, called Mission Possible, is among the strongest in the state. The key element of this strategy is the Teaching Induction Program, which pairs each new teacher with an experienced, mentor teacher. Jefferson County's strategy also includes county-wide, grade-specific, and subject specific professional development programs.