

Increasing Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness in Rural Tennessee

2017

Grow Your Own

Rural communities face unique challenges in attracting, developing and retaining teachers and school leaders. School districts in rural Tennessee are using the Teacher Incentive Fund to help create systems that develop talent from within, and create leadership opportunities to keep strong teachers in the district with new leadership positions. The results have been strong student achievement growth, improvements in classroom instructional skills, and increased retention of effective teachers and school leaders. At the same time, this work has enabled the school districts to create innovative approaches to growing the capacity of their current workforce. Teacher leadership positions offer the most effective educators opportunities for growth and to play a meaningful role in school governance and decision-making. This distributed leadership structure supports improvement based on specific local needs.



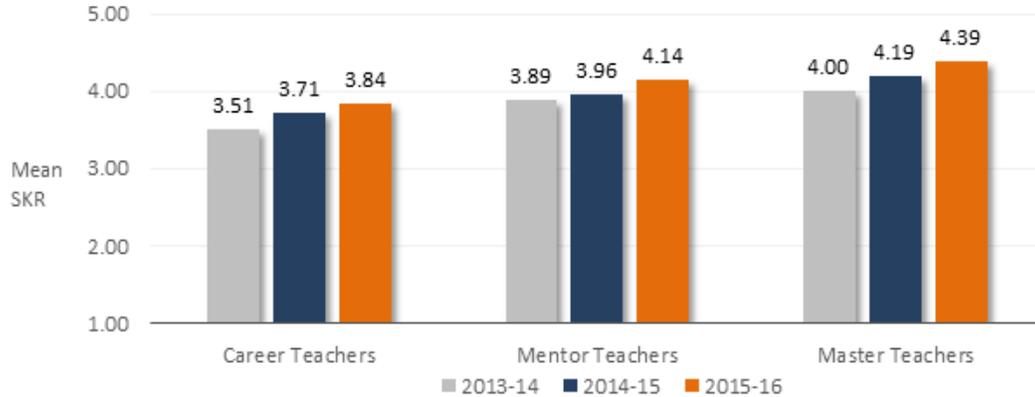
"The TAP System makes a difference in teaching and learning. It focuses all efforts toward the child, and that's what it should be about."

- Joe Barlow, Director, Dodson Branch School



Steady and Sustained Improvements in Teacher Instruction

In TAP Schools, teachers are observed multiple times per year using the TAP Rubric and receive Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibility (SKR) scores based on these observations. As shown below, the average SKR score for each teacher role increased from 2013-14 to 2015-16. Additionally, at the three examined time points, master teachers scored higher on average than mentor teachers, and mentor teachers, in turn, scored higher on average than career teachers. The career path component of the TAP System does appear to give more skilled teachers key instructional leadership positions.



"I've learned more in the past two years than I have in all of my nine years combined teaching. And that's rewarding because you know you're being the best for your students."

- Sarah Carroll, Mentor Teacher, Etowah City School

Dr. Melanie Miller Selected as Southeast Superintendent of the Year



Athens Director of Schools Dr. Melanie Miller was recognized as Southeast Superintendent of the Year by the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents.

Dr. Miller told the Daily Post-Athenian, "I do not consider it an individual or personal award. It is actually a reflection of the excellent students, faculty, staff, administrators, school board members, parents, and community which make up Athens City Schools."

Miller, who has served as Director of the Athens City School System since July 2015, was selected for the honor by her fellow school superintendents and administrators from across the southeast region. Miller was one of eight superintendents selected for the honor from across the state. She and her seven colleagues will be considered by a statewide panel to be named Tennessee Superintendent of the Year, which will be awarded in September. The statewide winner is considered for the national honor by AASA: The School Superintendents Association.