

# Tennessee



## Schools

### Athens City

City Park School  
Ingleside School  
North City School  
Westside School  
Athens City Middle School

### Etowah City

Etowah Elementary School

### Jackson County

Dodson Branch Elementary

### Manchester City

College Street Elementary  
Westwood Elementary  
Westwood Middle School

### Morgan County

Coalfield School

NIET partnered with five rural Tennessee school districts to implement TAP in 11 schools. Athens City, Manchester City and Etowah City school districts began implementing TAP districtwide, while one school each in Morgan County and Jackson County began TAP implementation.

These districts previously used the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) evaluation system, which is based on the TAP evaluation rubric. While using TEAM, these districts voted to transition to full TAP System implementation for the 2012–2013 school year. With TAP, these school districts gained access to NIET’s Comprehensive Online Data Entry System (CODE), allowing them to better manage and analyze teacher evaluations. Additionally, these districts began implementation of TAP cluster and leadership team meetings, and restructured their compensation systems.

The five districts used this first year as a planning year. The planning year evaluation drew on a variety of data sources including progress reports and focus groups with teachers and administrators.

## The Districts

### Athens City

Athens City School District is northeast of Chattanooga and contains two primary schools, two intermediate schools and one middle school. The Tennessee Department of Education reported 1,776 students enrolled across the five schools during the 2011–2012 school year. Of these, 52.1 percent were male, 75 percent were White, 14.6 percent were African American, and 63.2 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

### Etowah City

Etowah City is a single school system located in Etowah serving students in grades K–8. The Tennessee Department of Education reported 342 students enrolled during the 2011–2012 school year. Of these, 52.9 percent were male, 90.1 percent were White, and 77.8 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

### Jackson County

Jackson County School District contains two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Dodson Branch Elementary School, the TAP implementation school, serves students in grades PK–8. The Tennessee Department of Education reported 1,597 students enrolled across the four schools during the 2011–2012 school year. Of these, 50.3 percent were male, 97.3 percent were White, and 75.6 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

### **Manchester City**

Manchester City School District contains three schools: College Street Elementary, Westwood Elementary, and Westside Middle School. The Tennessee Department of Education reported 1,423 students enrolled across the three schools during the 2011–2012 school year. Of these, 52.1 percent were male, 80.7 percent were White, 10.1 percent were Hispanic, 6.3 percent were African American, and 71 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

### **Morgan County**

Morgan County School District in Wartburg, Tennessee, is about 50 miles east of Knoxville. This district contains eight schools. Coalfield School, the TAP implementation school, serves students in grades PK–12. The Tennessee Department of Education reported 3,229 students enrolled across the eight schools during the 2011–2012 school year. Of these, 52.2 percent were male, 98.6 percent were White, and 68.5 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

## **Key Evaluation Findings**

### Preparations made during the 2012–13 Year

- All districts posted and completed a competitive hiring process for mentor and master teachers.
- Athens City schools, Coalfield School, and Dodson Branch Elementary representatives completed site visits to existing TAP schools in Knox County.
- All districts partnered with higher education institutions.
- Principals, assistant principals, master and mentor teachers from all districts completed TAP CORE training.
- Athens City Schools and Coalfield School sent TAP Leadership Team members to the 2013 National TAP Conference.
- TAP Leadership Team members from Etowah City School, Dodson Branch Elementary, Coalfield School and Manchester City Schools attended the 2013 TAP Summer Institute.
- Athens City and Morgan County developed a TAP section on their district websites.

### Focus Groups

Three focus groups—one for career teachers, one for mentor and master teachers, and one for administrators—were held. Teachers and administrators reported increased knowledge and understanding of effective TAP implementation. Further, as highlighted in the quotes below, teachers observed improvements in classroom practices, and credited these changes to TAP.

Overall, teachers reported seeing impacts of the TAP System on both their teaching practices and student behavior and outcomes. Regarding teacher practices, the contributions of cluster meetings were emphasized. Teachers reported appreciation for having time to reflect on certain topics, like academic feedback, and for having the opportunity to brainstorm with other teachers. One teacher stated, “My lessons are fabulous now. They are much better than they used to be.” Teachers mentioned that they

have learned to teach their students to do more critical thinking, and have learned how to do this in various ways and subjects.

Differences in student behavior and outcomes were also discussed during the career teacher focus group. Teachers noted that, as a result of the changes teachers made in their teaching practices, students appeared more engaged. Specifically, teachers mentioned that students are now paying closer attention, asking more questions, and, overall, are taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Master and mentor teachers also discussed that teachers engage in more professional conversations with one another because of TAP implementation. One mentor teacher reported, “conversations about teaching are up two million percent! We used to just teach all day, now we talk about teaching, we plan to teach, we are better at teaching.” As an example, one master teacher recalled a conversation she had with a fellow teacher after a cluster meeting. The master teacher explained that the career teacher said, “I’ll do this, but it isn’t going to work.” This teacher later returned to the master teacher and said, “I was wrong; all of my students were more focused, they did it, this worked; I needed that help.” This master teacher said this story exemplifies what TAP does; it gives our teachers what they need—when they need it—to improve their craft.

“Yes, [TAP] is extra work, but I feel better about what I’m doing in my classroom. I feel more prepared. I feel more professional.”

-TN Career Teacher

“I see evidence every week of little things that teachers take out of cluster and go back and I will see these implemented... You are witnessing these things that are making a better classroom teacher and better student learning.”

-TN Master Teacher