



**CEELO Leadership  
Academy Job-Embedded  
Project Cohort 4**  
**Dr. Darlene Estes-Del Re**

Dr. Darlene Estes-Del Re, Executive Director, Office of Early Learning

# It's the journey that matters...

“It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end”

--Ernest Hemingway



The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin, dark blue horizontal bar.

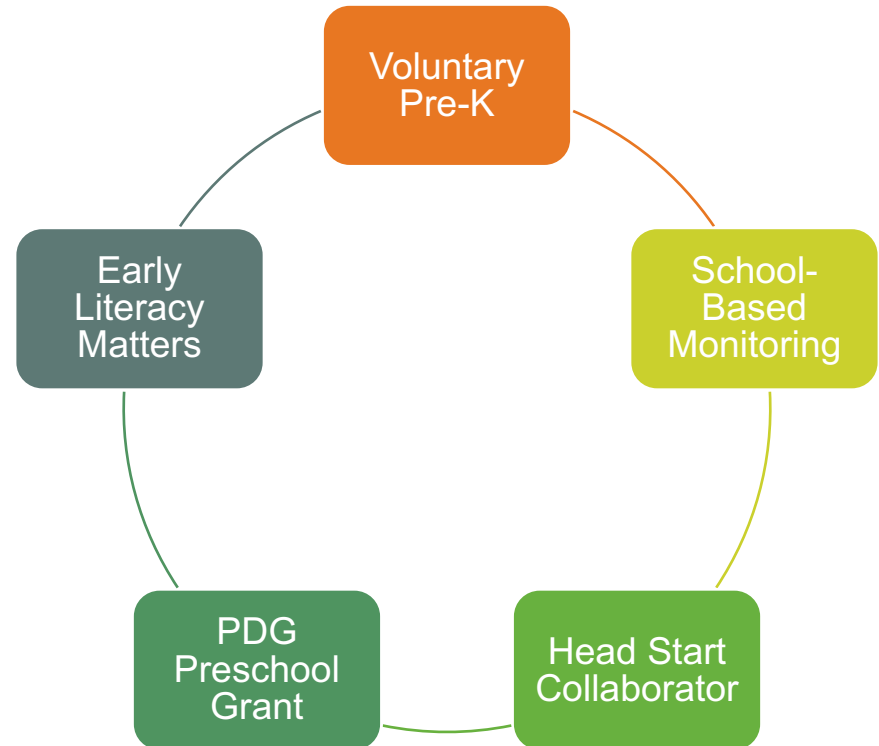
**TN**

®

# **My Leadership Journey**

# New State Education Agency Leader

- First year serving as TDOE Executive Director of the Office of Early Learning
- New Office of Early Learning to Lead
- Vanderbilt Study and Pre-K Quality Act of 2016 charge to improve the quality of Voluntary Pre-K programs.
- Shift to Competitive VPK Grant Applications based on quality



# State Education Agency Training 101?

- Strong Early Childhood experience and background
- Leadership experience at school and college program levels
- Knowledge of systems thinking without honing of skills through practice
- New Office of Early Learning Team to lead
- Limited knowledge of policy work



# CEELO Leadership Academy Cohort 4

## Valued Growth Opportunity

- 1:1 Leadership Coaching Support
- Cohort 4 Fellows Support
- Leadership Development
  - Leadership on the Line
  - Systems Thinking
  - Results-Based Leadership
  - Type and Communication
  - Crucial Conversations
  - Staying reflective and anchored



The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

**TN**

®

# **My Job-Embedded Project**

# JEP Elevator Speech Description

- Play is the best preparation for school success. Preschool teachers are often unsure of play's place in school and struggle with selecting teaching strategies that are developmentally effective and aligned with early learning academic standards.
- For my job-embedded project, I partner with leading early childhood experts in Tennessee to create a *Teaching Pre-K in Tennessee Playbook* that puts play-based instructional strategies in the fingertips of teachers.
- When teachers are unsure of their role or what teacher “move” or “play” to use, the *Teaching Pre-K in Tennessee Playbook* helps teachers go into the game prepared to teach like champions using teaching and learning strategies that result in children ready to learn and succeed in school.



# Why this work is important

- Early childhood teachers and administrators have varied levels of understanding of child development and how academic rigor is best supported through play-based learning.
- This Teaching Pre-K in Tennessee Playbook will provide explicit examples of the ways teachers can scaffold and promote higher levels of engagement and learning through children's play.
- Administrators will be better armed to support teachers in their use of developmentally effective instructional practices.

# Objectives of the job-embedded project

- Increase pre-k teachers' knowledge, understanding, and use of developmentally appropriate instructional practices
- Create a shift in mental models held by early childhood educators regarding developmentally appropriate practice and academic rigor.
- Increase teacher's use of developmentally appropriate instructional practices
- Increase administrators support of developmentally mentally effective instruction.
- Increase instructional quality of VPK programs

# Assumptions and Potential Challenges

## Assumptions

- Strongly held mental model held that developmentally appropriate practice and academic rigor are mutually exclusive of one another poses a potential challenge.
- The document alone will change teacher practice.
- Teachers will read and use the document to inform their practice.

## Potential Challenges

- Engage diverse early childhood stakeholders to ensure strong buy-in and support.
- Engage with key internal and external K-12 stakeholders to create strong and appropriate pre-K to 12 alignment.
- Funding to provide professional development training, coaching supports, program monitoring/assessment.

The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

**TN**

®

**Progress Made**

# Stakeholder Taskforce is Formed

An Early Learning Taskforce of key stakeholders from higher education, public school administered preschool programs, and private early childhood programs was created to inform the development of the Teaching Pre-K in Tennessee Playbook.



# Early Learning Taskforce Purpose

- Consider a statewide strategy to effectively support high quality preschool instruction
- Inform the development of *Teaching Pre-K in Tennessee Playbook* from your perspective lenses of expertise
- Bring the voice of leaders, teachers, families, and children to the work as we consider both the current state and desired future of Pre-K in Tennessee.

# Project timeline

- September 10: Invites to serve on small work groups
- September 14: Webinar to discuss expectations and timelines for small work group
- September 17: Review and provide feedback on shared Literature Review
- September 18 to November 12: Identify instructional strategies
- November 16: Early Learning Advisory Taskforce Meeting
- January 17: Webinar with small group writers
- February-May: continue writing the document
- May 15: Taskforce to review and provide final feedback

The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

**TN**

®

# Highlights from the Taskforce work



The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

TN

®

Setting “The Why”

# Tennessee Succeeds

★ Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

📖 Early Foundations and Literacy

🎓 High School and Bridge to Postsecondary

🔒 All Means All

🍏 Educator Support

⚙️ District Empowerment

📈 School Improvement

## Our Goals



Goal 1



Goal 2



Goal 3



Goal 4

# We've Made Progress Toward Our Goals

## Goal 1

**Tennessee will rank in the top half of states on NAEP by 2019**

*We've moved into the top half in both grade 4 and grade 8 science, and all other rankings are solidly in the 30s — up from a decade ago, when we were consistently a bottom 10 state.*

## Goal 2

**75 percent of third graders will be proficient in reading by 2025**

*We have a range of work underway through the Read to be Ready campaign and our aligned initiatives to strengthen early literacy.*

## Goal 3

**The average ACT composite in Tennessee will be 21 by 2020**

*Our class of 2017 has already increased the average to 20.1, with more students taking the exam.*

## Goal 4

**Most of the class of 2020 graduates will earn a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree**

*We've been nationally recognized for our work to increase access to postsecondary and strengthen career & technical education.*

# Office of Early Learning Vision

**Every child in Tennessee, from birth to age eight, will engage in rich, joyful, learning experiences that purposefully develop leaders, thinkers, and innovators of tomorrow.**

# Leaders, Thinkers, and Innovators

Some of you may have seen the video we are about to play. As you watch it again or for the first time today, think about:

- the children in our pre-K classrooms this year are the class of 2032; and
- what they will need to know in order to be the leaders, thinkers, and innovators of tomorrow.

# *Did you know?*



The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

**TN**

®

**Where we've been**

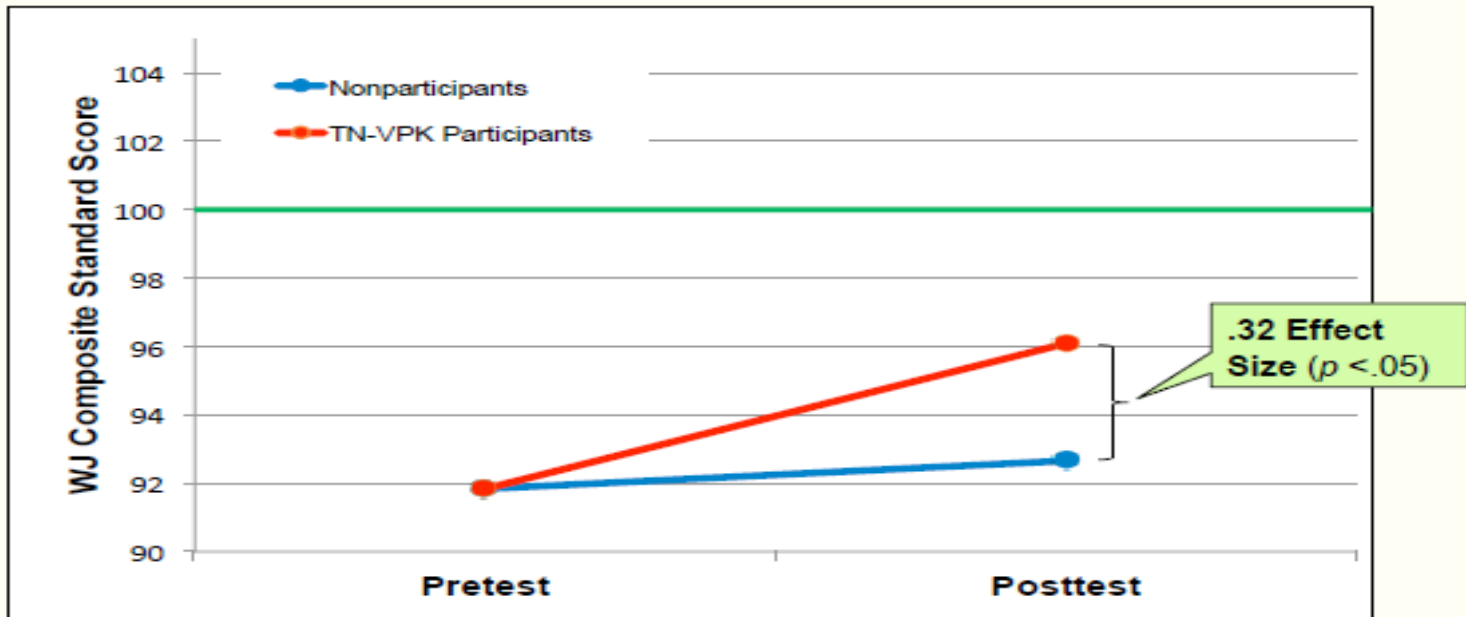
# Vanderbilt Study: Pre-K Ready for K



VANDERBILT  
PEABODY COLLEGE

PEABODY  
researchinstitute

## TN-VPK Effects at End of Pre-K on the Overall WJ Achievement Composite Score





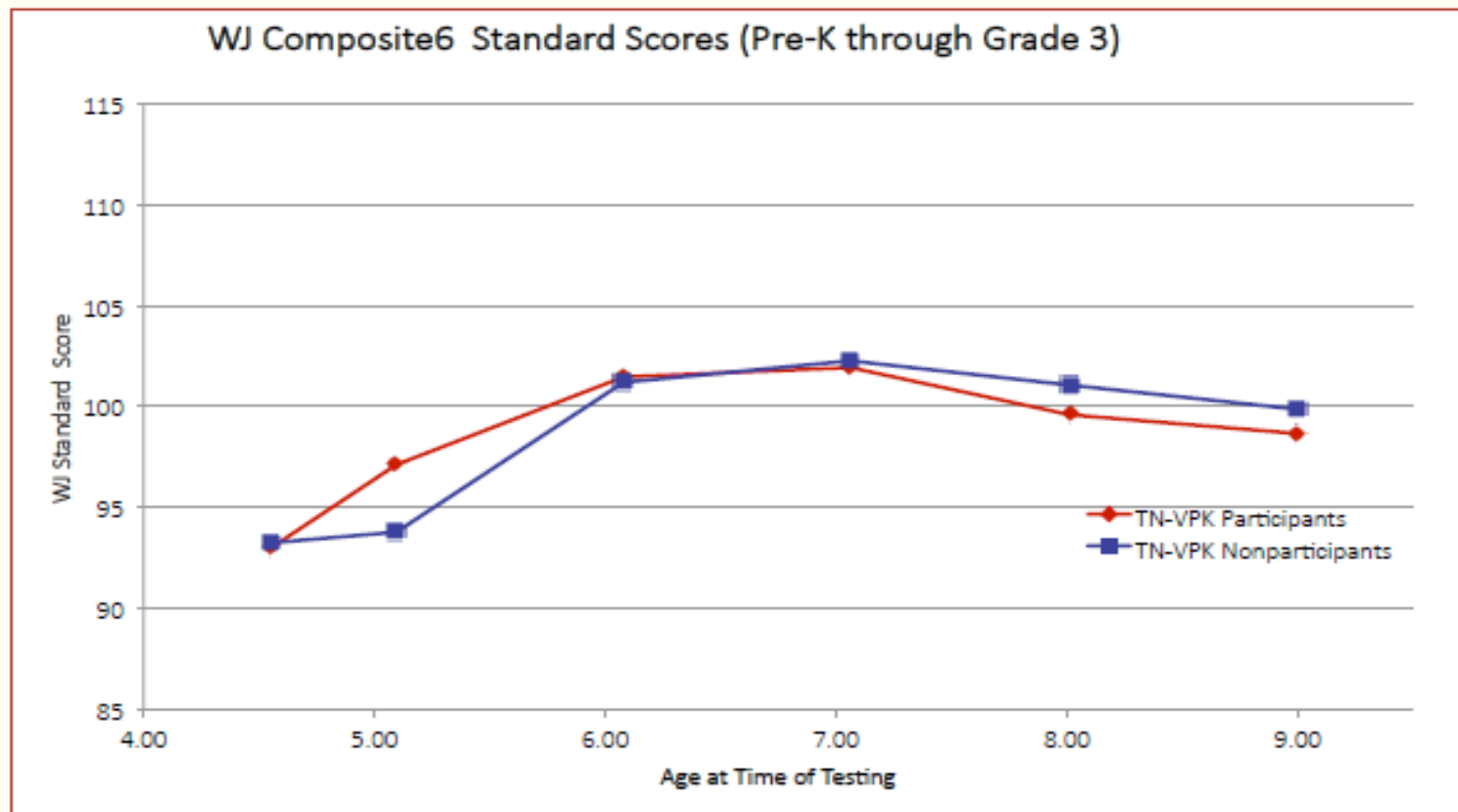
# TN-VPK Evaluation Results: Fade-Out



VANDERBILT  
PEABODY COLLEGE

PEABODY  
researchinstitute

## Overall Achievement Advantage Fades



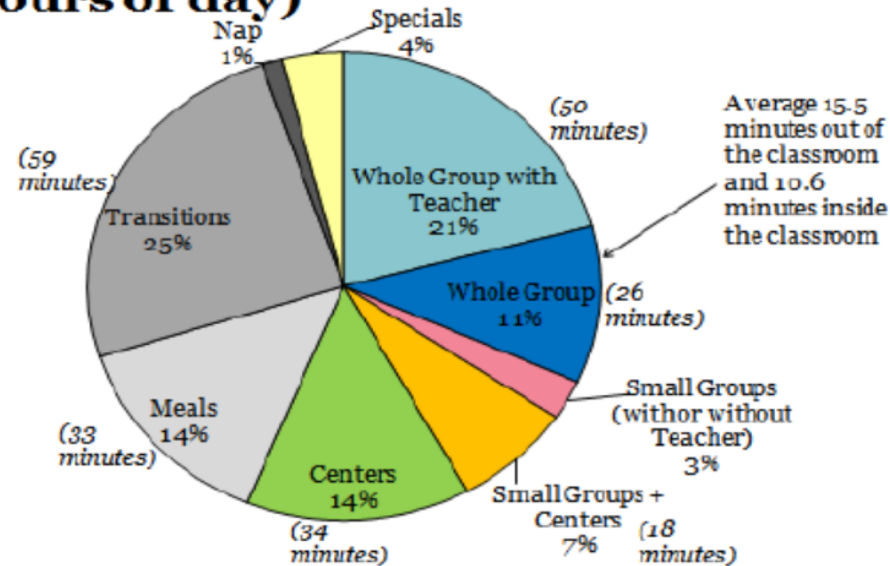
# Other discoveries



VANDERBILT  
PEABODY COLLEGE

PEABODY  
researchinstitute

## Instructional Settings (1<sup>st</sup> 4 hours of day)



The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

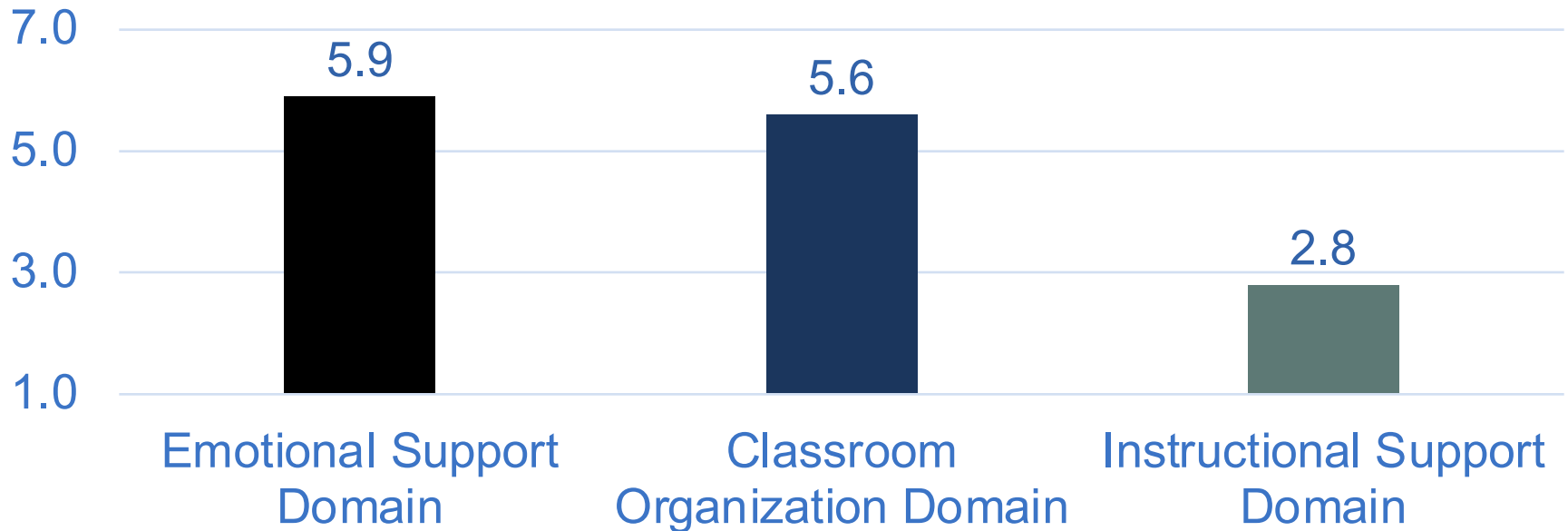
**TN**

®

**Where we are**

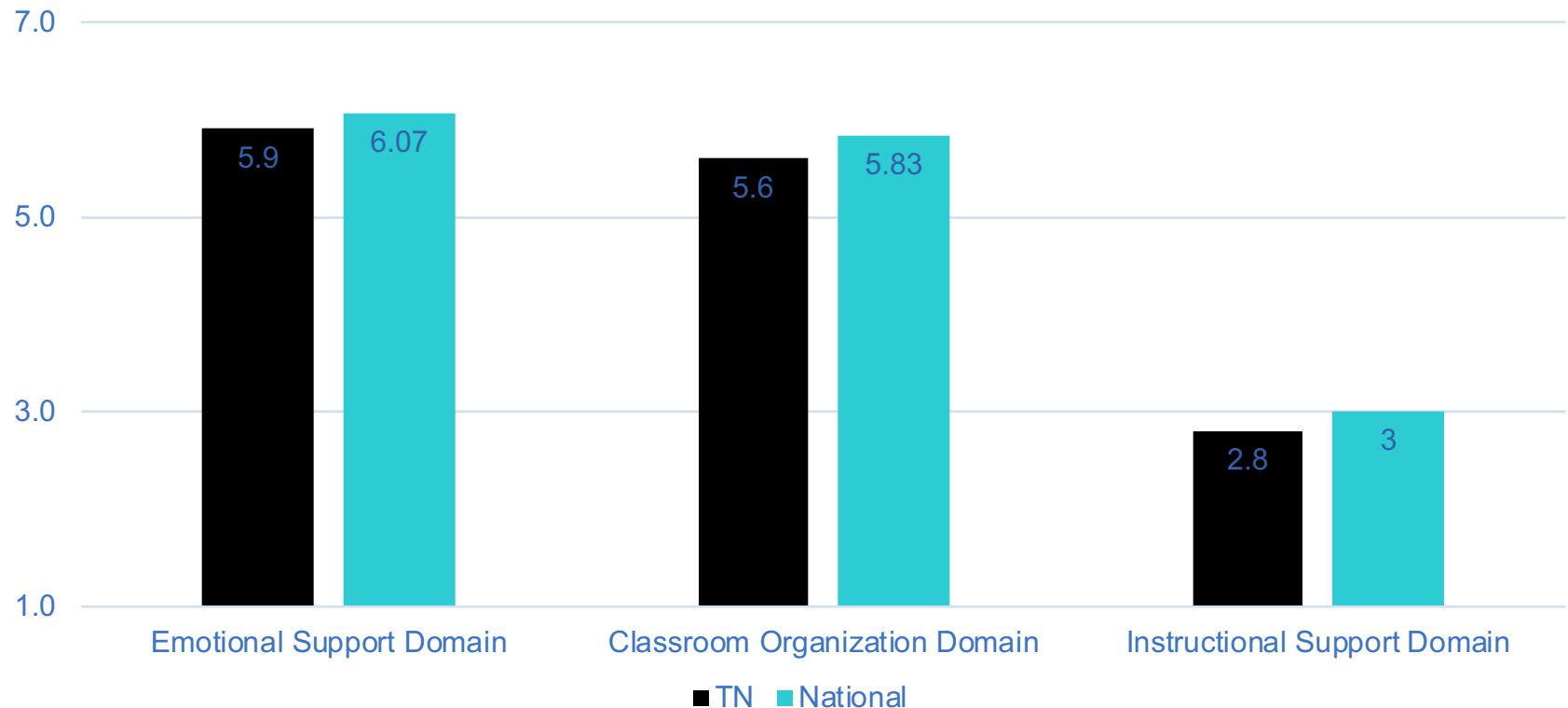
# Our CLASS Baseline Data Findings

Average Domain Scores



# Our CLASS Baseline Data Findings

Average Domain Scores



# Why is the effort needed?

## Teachers say they need it.

Area of need	% of teachers who report needing more than just a little support	State-wide Indicator Average
Instructional strategies and practices (ex. Questioning)	Pre-K 80% K-8 45% All teachers 44%	Q-3.61 AF-3.73 A/M-3.84
Standard-specific instruction	Pre-K 68% K-8 43% All teachers 40%	S/O- 3.78 TCK- 4.33
Aligning standards, curriculum, & student learning outcomes	Pre-K 75% K-8 48% All teachers 47%	Planning- 4.11 TCK- 4.33
Analyzing/interpreting student summative & formative assessments	Pre-K 71% K-8 42% All teachers 41%	Assess- 3.75 S/O- 3.78

The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

**TN**

®

**High-Quality Pre-K  
Instruction Focus**

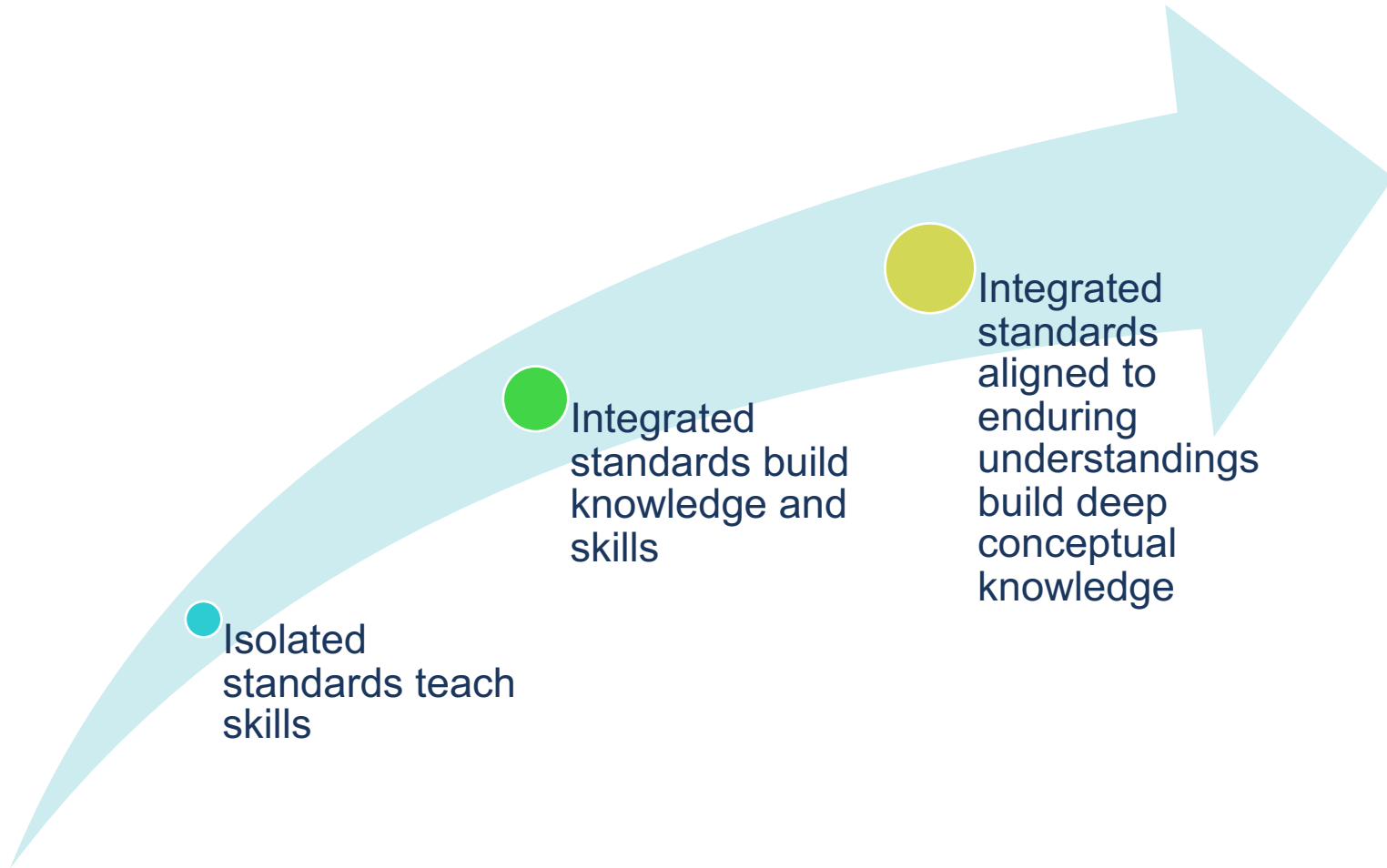
# Early Learning Instruction

All students need exposure to learning standards; how we get them there varies.

- The TN-ELDS and K-12 standards inform **WHAT** students need to know and learn.
- The instructional strategies based in developmental science inform **HOW** students will learn and grow toward the standards.
- The instructional structures inform **WHERE** the learning will occur.



# Standards and Concepts



# SOAR Analysis of Current Pre-K in TN

The Early Learning Taskforce analyzed:

- **S**trengths: What are our greatest strengths?
- **O**pportunities: What are our best opportunities?
- **A**spirations: What is our desired future for Pre-K in TN?
- **R**esults: What are the measurable results that will tell us if we've achieved that vision for Pre-K in TN?

The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.

**TN**

®

**Consider Statewide  
Systemic Strategy**

# Need for system approach for quality improvement implementation

- Training district teams in effective early learning practices
- Monitoring for quality: Inspecting what we expect
- Collecting data to capture our improvement progress
- Aligning with K-12 work with a “push up” of developmental effective strategies

The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin blue horizontal bar.


**TN**

®

**Leveraging existing  
structures**

# K-3 Teaching Literacy in Tennessee

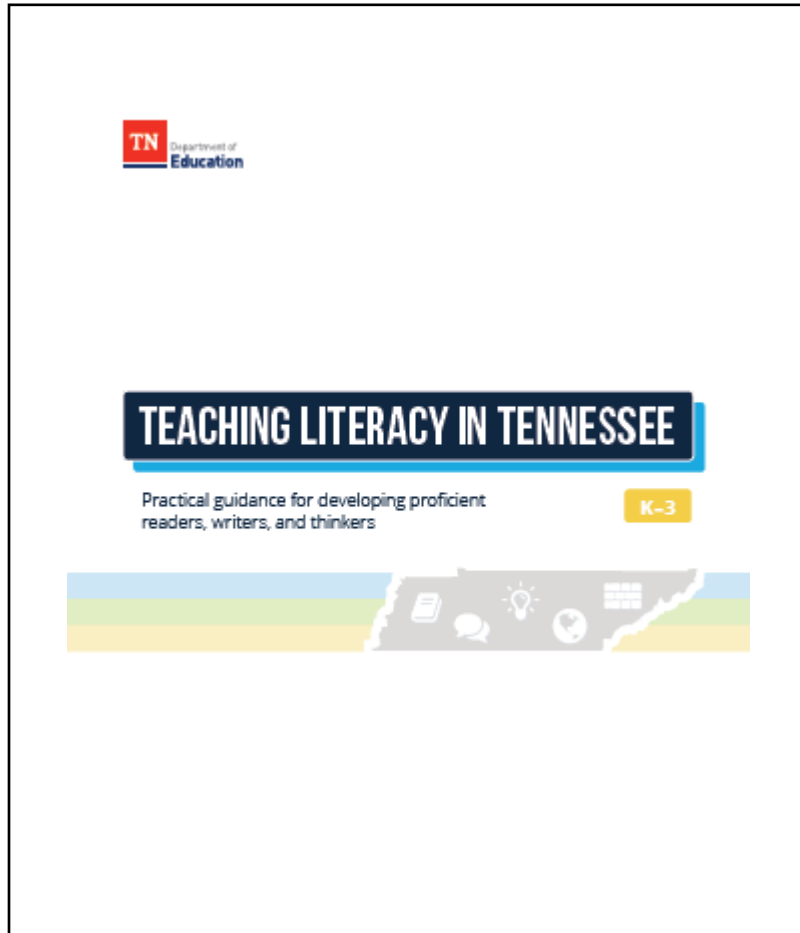
**READ TO BE  
READY**



---

**75 percent of Tennessee students  
reading on grade level by 2025**

# Teaching Literacy in Tennessee Theory of Action



**If we provide daily opportunities for ALL students to build skills-based and knowledge-based competencies by...**

- engaging in a high volume of reading;
- reading and listening to complex texts that are on or beyond grade level;
- thinking deeply about and responding to text through speaking and writing;
- developing the skill and craft of a writer;
- practicing foundational skills that have been taught explicitly and systematically and applied through reading and writing;

**Then, we will meet or exceed our goal of having 75% of Tennessee third graders reading on grade level by 2025.**

# Plant and Sow Seeds of Systems Thinking

- See the big picture of quality early learning initiatives
- Leverage pre-k to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade coaching network with a “push up” of developmentally effective instruction
- Equip district leaders to think systemically for establishing, supporting, and sustaining quality early education.
- Use of stakeholder engagement and feedback loops
- Be data-driven and results-based focus



# My Continued Journey...

- Protecting time to be reflective and anchored
- Staying connected to Leadership Academy Fellows
- Honing my systems thinking skills through Train the Trainer opportunity
- Maintaining passion and stamina while in the midst of difficult work



# Tribute to my Cohort 4 Fellows

I dedicate this song, “No Ordinary Miracle” to you. For the next few minutes, close your eyes and focus on your own remarkable journey. Think of all you have sacrificed, accomplished, experienced, and are yet to do. Think of those who have supported you along the way. Recognize that what you do each day is “no ordinary miracle” and hold tight to your passion and lead with courage, strength, and confidence.

A special thank you to the CEELO Leadership team and coaches who have contributed to our growth as leaders.