

EDITORIAL

May 24, 2017 Online at www.proedtn.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHANGING THE TRAJECTORY

We recognize the challenges that public schools face as well as the need for continued improvement. Our members are dedicated to reaching the goal of every child achieving at his or her highest potential. Every child in our country, no matter their socio-economic status, should have the right to receive a quality education.

Education must put children on a path to achieve their full economic potential when they reach adulthood. When every child is educated to their full potential, all of society will benefit. Our economy goes hand in hand with quality education. A strong educational system is essential not only to the successful functioning of a democracy, but also to its very future.

Education absolutely shapes children's lives. A quality education will open doors for children and give them the essential skills for success in the future. In a perfect world, all children will become successful learners, as well as confident, resilient individuals and responsible citizens. It is why our organization, Professional Educators of Tennessee, advocates for the recruitment of quality educators in Tennessee schools, and we work for their retention. Teachers are the single most important resource we must ensure that our children learn. We need bright, passionate, inspired, and innovative people in our classrooms. If we empower our educators and engage them fully, we can change the trajectory for countless children in our state and nation.

In order to meet the needs of 21st century learners, schools need to be engaged, optimistic, vibrant, and stimulating places for children and teachers. We must develop a culture that inspires all children to do their best and a curriculum that is meaningful, relevant, and challenging. Schools must also be places where students are challenged to learn and to be encouraged by their success. We need to identify potential academic problems much earlier for our children, and address issues as they arise. This must be tied to our efforts in early childhood education. To keep students fully engaged, we must embrace the potential of technology and make optimal use of available digital devices.

Reading and literacy is perhaps the most critical step to building a quality education, which will enable children to reach their full academic and individual potential. Reading has a profound impact on academics and can affect us in all areas of our life. Unfortunately, Tennessee's reading gaps are extensive for students who are economically disadvantaged, of racial minorities, disabled, and/or are English language learners. The State's Read to be Ready initiative, along with dyslexia legislation, should help address some of those issues.

We have long contended that public education isn't "broken." Public education policy is "broken," and neighborhood public schools are suffering the consequences. Many times decades of societal issues are not

SUMMARY

Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee expresses his views about the public education system and the improvements that can be made to enhance the quality of education students receive.

addressed. These cultural issues get laid at the feet of public schools. Until we are willing to address those specific issues on a larger scale, our schools have their hands tied.

The problems many of our schools have developed (especially in our urban schools) did not occur overnight, so solutions will take time to evolve. We must have short-term objectives that produce immediate results and long-term objectives that may take time to develop. We should give our schools that time. Research indicates Tennessee is moving in the right direction, but with numerous concerns remaining. Our public schools are our future as a state and a nation.

We need civic organizations, the faith community, and businesses to work together. Together, we must fan the flames of hope and transformation in communities where optimism has been left behind. The importance of smart and effective policies cannot be overstated. Our effort must be strictly non-partisan. Public education is a federal concern, a state responsibility, and a local operation. A strong educational system is essential, and our commitment to shared values and a clear vision must encourage collaboration and teamwork.

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JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Brentwood, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact [Audrey Shores, Director of Communications](#), at 1-800-471-4867 ext. 102.