



July 10, 2017

Education community members,

I have never been more proud to be a part of Tennessee's work in education. Over the past year, with the support of our districts, educators, families, advocates, business leaders, elected officials, and higher education partners, we have made incredible strides in strengthening our K-12 education system. I am confident that our collective efforts will lead to the success and well-rounded growth of Tennessee's future leaders.

Our year has been focused on opening doors for all students and creating opportunities for every child to grow. A key way we have shown that focus is in our plan to implement the new federal K-12 education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act. In each step of our ESSA plan, we have sought to build on the work we started in our strategic plan, *Tennessee Succeeds. Tennessee Succeeds*—and now our ESSA plan—embodies what we think **access** and **opportunity** look like as we move forward:

- Setting high expectations for all students, with an assessment that measures critical thinking, writing, and problem-solving skills
- Ensuring more success on pathways to postsecondary and workforce readiness
- Providing supports for every student to meet their individual needs
- Focusing on growth and continuous improvement
- Recognizing, supporting, and celebrating the vital role of our leaders and educators
- Involving the local community

Because you are key partners, we wanted to share some of the highlights from the past year and update you on our progress toward our goals. This is only a small snapshot, but we hope it gives you a glimpse into the variety of the work underway at the department and in schools across the state.

As we look forward to the 2017-18 school year, we will build on the work that has started, with particular focus on **improving our younger students' reading abilities, transitioning to the Tennessee Academic Standards**, and **expanding initiatives to increase the number of opportunities—and successes—all students have as they prepare for college and the workplace.**

Thank you for what you are doing to support our 1 million students in Tennessee.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Candice McQueen".

Dr. Candice McQueen
Tennessee Commissioner of Education