

News - University School Receives Award for Student Achievement on TVAAS Scores

University School is proud to announce that our School has been recognized as one of the top four leading schools in the state of Tennessee for achieving the highest scores and most improvement over the last three years in all areas of academic success!!

The following documents some exciting accomplishments during our journey to success:

Our SACS Vision Statement

Student achievement at University School will continually improve over the next 5 years enabling us to accomplish our goal of becoming an exemplary school.

- **In 2008 we achieved the top rating in this region for yearly achievement gain among middle and K-8 schools on the **Education Consumer Foundation** ranking (see the K-8 and Middle School Effectiveness Ranking)**
- **In 2008 we are receiving a state award for being one of the top schools in TN in student achievement gains**
- **From 2003 - 2007 we have shown consistent student gains in all subject areas on our TVAAS scores (see the TVAAS gains chart)**

**University School
School Improvement Results
TVAAS Gains Chart
2003-2007**

Tennessee K-8 & Middle School Effectiveness Schools Ranked by Yearly Achievement Gain 2005-2007

Average yearly achievement gain in math and reading/language arts

High

Low

Rank among 531 Middle schools

Least Effective

Most Effective

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University of Tennessee

Fall Branch Elementary

Indian Trail Middle School

West View School

Lamar Elementary

Gray Elementary School

Boones Creek Middle School

Sulphur Springs Elementary

South Central Elementary

Jonesborough Middle School

Science Hill High School

Composite Performance Grade
TN Report Card

- Grade A - Exceptional
- Grade B - Exceeds Standard
- Grade C - Meets Standard
- Grade D - Below Standard
- Grade F - Deficient

1998 Growth Standard

Current State Average

Letter to Dr. DeFrieze detailing award:

March 13, 2008

Principal

Dear Principal,

I am pleased to inform you that the **Education Consumers Foundation** has identified seven Johnson City/Washington County schools that are among the most effective in Tennessee. We will be promoting this fact both locally and nationally, and we hope that you will join with us in bringing their superior work to light.

Based on our analysis of the data available from the Tennessee Department of Education, the Johnson City area has a greater concentration of effective schools than virtually any other urban area in the state. As part of our "Most Effective Schools" program, we will send each of these schools a certificate of recognition and put an ad in the Johnson City Press highlighting their achievement.

The schools are Boone's Creek Elementary, Fall Branch Elementary, Indian Trail Middle, Towne Acres Elementary, University School, West View Elementary, and Woodland Elementary. All rank in the top 20% of Tennessee schools as measured by the annual math and reading/language achievement gains of their students.

What is this recognition?

Unknown to most Tennesseans, Tennessee has what is arguably the most sophisticated educational accountability system in the country. Called the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), it measures how effective a given school (or a given teacher) is in lifting student achievement regardless of the student's starting level or social and economic advantages or disadvantages. TVAAS scores are a true reflection of the work that each school is doing to advance the educational progress of its students, and our certificate is based on that measurement.

TVAAS is different from the more-familiar TCAP achievement scores. School TCAP averages are primarily an indicator of how many talented and advantaged students happen to attend a given school. By contrast, TVAAS scores indicate how much a school's students are progressing from year to year. Because there can be very substantial differences in the starting levels of students from school to school, TCAP averages can be very misleading. Schools with high numbers of talented and advantaged students can look like they are doing a great job when, in truth, their students are making minimal progress. Schools with fewer talented and advantaged students can look like they are of lower quality when, in fact, their students are making great strides.

What Is the Education Consumers Foundation?

We are a wholly independent non-profit consumer organization, similar to the Consumers Union but focused exclusively on education. We are headquartered in

Arlington, VA, with roots in Tennessee; but our work is mainly in cyberspace. We are targeting Tennessee because TVAAS is becoming a national model for school accountability. Ohio and Pennsylvania, for example, are years behind Tennessee but beginning to implement value-added assessment systems of their own. We have created a unique interactive graphic that permits users to easily see how local schools rank in comparison to other schools or districts within the state (see enclosed flyer), and we are planning to extend our work to other states in the coming months and years.

What does this award mean to parents and other stakeholders?

Our primary objective is to promote school quality by helping consumers understand which schools are most effective and which need to improve. This is important information for residents, of course, but it is also critical knowledge for families and companies interested in relocating. In particular, high-tech companies fleeing taxation and urban congestion want good schools, and Tennessee is one of the very few states where the best can be clearly identified.

How can you get involved?

Here are some ways that you can help us with our mission and highlight the educational advantages offered by the Johnson City area.

- Join with us in recognizing the Johnson City area's most effective schools. Publicize the awards. Send a postcard to parents and other local residents as part of your engagement and outreach activities. We have samples. Organize or collaborate in a celebration.
- Help us build an informed constituency for effective schooling. Encourage everyone to visit our website at www.education-consumers.org and to compare Johnson City's schools with other schools in Tennessee. Learn more about TVAAS and how better scores are critical to local workforce development.
- Look at our report (Effective Schools, Common Practices) on how the winners of our annual Principal Awards are making their schools so effective. Surprisingly, their success depends far more on good leadership and effective practices than added resources.

Tennessee is fortunate to have TVAAS. It affords Tennessee communities an unprecedented opportunity to highlight some of their greatest assets on a national stage. We hope you will take full advantage of the opportunity. E-mail or call us if we can be of help.

Cordially,

J.E. Stone, Ed.D.
President
Education Consumers Foundation





Education Consumers Foundation

About the ECF Tennessee Project

The Education Consumers Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the interests of education's consumers. The foundation helps parents, parent groups, school boards, legislative committees, and all others who seek to obtain independent, consumer-friendly assessments of education policy and practice.

While the organization provides independent and accurate information to education consumers across the country, much of its original research and outreach efforts occur under the umbrella of its Tennessee Project.

The foundation focuses on Tennessee to take advantage of data generated by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), the most sophisticated value-added initiative in the country. Value-added data is a remarkable tool, providing a clear indicator of schools' effectiveness in increasing student achievement. And because TVAAS has been in place since the early 1990s, it provides a historical data trail that can further advance analytical efforts.

ECF initiatives found under The Tennessee Project umbrella include:

The Value-Added Achievement Awards

In 2006, the ECF launched an annual recognition program to identify and reward the principals of the most effective elementary and middle schools in the state. Schools are selected on the basis of their three-year average value-added gains in reading and math; to be eligible for the award, principals must have served in a school for at least five years.

Winning principals receive a certificate, flag, and up to \$3,000 at a ceremony held at the state capitol each May. The past two ceremonies were co-hosted by Lana Seivers, Commissioner of Education in Tennessee, with many state dignitaries in attendance.

ECF School Performance Charts

The Education Consumers Foundation has collected effectiveness data on every elementary and middle school in the state, and made that data available to the public in an intuitive and easy-to-use interactive format. The foundation's charts, updated each year with data from the state department of education, allow users to find out how local schools compare to others in their district and the state in terms of value-added performance.

Effective Schools, Common Practices

In spring 2007, a researcher visited six of the most effective elementary and middle schools in the state of Tennessee to uncover the practices they have in common. His findings, along with information on the research base behind common practices, can be found in this new report.

Value-Added Data Analysis

ECF has analyzed the relationship between school effectiveness and other variables and has made its findings available to the public. For example, analyses have shown virtually no correlation between value-added performance and the poverty rates of the student population while indicating a strong correlation between proficiency in state assessments.

Most Effective Schools Certificate

ECF's newest initiative involves identifying schools in the top 20% of value-added performance and recognizing them with a certificate and announcement in their community.

The foundation continues to look at new applications of this rich trove of value-added data and new ways of distributing information to citizens that can help the understanding of school performance and related issues. To learn more about supporting ECF's work, contact Dr. J.E. Stone at professor@education-consumers.org or call 703-248-2611.

To learn more about the ECF Tennessee Project, visit:

www.education-consumers.org

Congratulations, University School students and faculty!!! We are so very proud of you and all of your hard work!!!