

*The Education Consumers Foundation answers the question asked by every parent...*

# Is Your Child's School One of Nashville's Best?

Every day we hear about Nashville area schools that are having problems. But did you know that many are doing a good job - and that some are truly superior?

While well-known measures like TCAP scores, attendance, graduation rates, and others can all help paint a complete picture of a school, there is one other measure that speaks directly to school effectiveness, i.e., how much the school is doing to help each child learn, regardless of their starting point. That measure is value-added performance, and it is available to parents courtesy of Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System, or TVAAS.

Everyone expects their schools to provide students with a year's worth of academic growth for a year's worth of time; but some schools are providing more and others less. That is the kind of information provided by TVAAS, and it is the information that allows us to recognize the highly effective Nashville schools highlighted to the right.

Most parents are familiar with schools' TCAP scores, but these tell you more about the characteristics of the student body than about the schools' role in producing academic growth. If a school's student body is comprised mostly of advantaged students, the school may have a high percentage of students meeting TCAP proficiency standards regardless of how much or how little its students learned during the school year. For many students, meeting Tennessee's minimum TCAP standards is not a challenge. However, if a school has high TVAAS scores, it means that its students were challenged and that they made significant gains in achievement.

The Education Consumers Foundation seeks to recognize and acknowledge the work of those schools that are doing the most for their students; that is, the schools with high TVAAS scores. These are the schools that are helping their students, regardless of their TCAP scores, to be all they can be. These are the schools that are genuinely demonstrating that all children can learn and, thus, deserve to be honored and imitated. Tennessee's future prosperity depends on them, and we are proud to recognize some of them here.

*Look inside for more information on effective schooling, and details on the effectiveness rankings of elementary and middle schools throughout Davidson County!*

## *Tennessee's* **Most Effective**

**2008 • Top 20% • Elementary/Middle Divisions**

**Best in raising individual student achievement**

*Recognized by the Education Consumers Foundation*

### **Recognizing the Most Effective Schools in Davidson County**

Through its **Most Effective Schools** campaign, the Education Consumers Foundation recognizes Tennessee elementary and middle schools in the top 20% of value-added assessment scores, a critical ranking of school effectiveness.

Davidson County schools performing at the highest levels of effectiveness include:

#### **Elementary Schools**

- Amqui Elementary
- Paragon Mills Elementary
- Lockeland Elementary Design Center
- Kirkpatrick Elementary Enhanced Option
- Smithson Craigshead Academy
- Stanford Elementary Montessori Design Center
- McGavock Elementary
- Charlotte Park Elementary

#### **K-8/Middle Schools**

- West End Middle School
- Meigs Middle Magnet School
- Dupont Tyler Middle School
- Head Middle Mathematics/Science Magnet
- Dalewood Middle School
- McMurray Middle School

# School Performance Charts

*ECF provides an easy way to identify the best schools in a district or in the state*

The charts on the opposite page are simply the value-added performance scores of Tennessee elementary and middle schools laid out in graphic format to make it easy to compare their relative effectiveness. Each Davidson County school is represented by a point on the chart, showing where it falls against others in the state.

The score for each school comes from the three-year average of a school's value-added performance in reading and math. All of the data used to produce these charts, including the grading system and cutoff points, comes from the Tennessee State Department of Education. The Education Consumers Foundation has not done any editorializing or introduced its own judgements.

Schools are ranked from most effective (top right) to least effective (bottom left). The baseline of the chart represents the average value-added performance of Tennessee elementary and middle schools in 1998, which is the state's current gauge of progress. The red line represents the current state average.

To see the names and rankings of the schools highlighted in the charts at right, visit ECF's Most Effective Schools website at [www.mosteffectiveschools.org](http://www.mosteffectiveschools.org), which offers downloadable information sheets, or visit the School Performance Charts page of the ECF website at [www.education-consumers.org/tnproject/spc.htm](http://www.education-consumers.org/tnproject/spc.htm), where you can create your own charts (as seen below).

## *Want to build your own School Performance Charts?*

The charts in this brochure were printed directly from an interactive and intuitive program made available on the ECF website. It is a free resource for anyone interested in school performance, and one that we would encourage you to explore.

The charts allow you to select multiple schools and/or multiple districts to compare school performance; you can flag individual schools by name, move their names around for better layout, or

highlight the winners of ECF's Value-Added Achievement Awards. Once you've built your charts, you can print them to a single page or to a two-page format that can be used as a wall chart.

Charts are available with the most recent data from the state; you can also go back one or two years to review changes in performance over time. You can even look at an alternate view of the charts as if the current state average served as the baseline.

Go to [www.education-consumers.org/tnproject/spc.htm](http://www.education-consumers.org/tnproject/spc.htm)

## Question and Answer

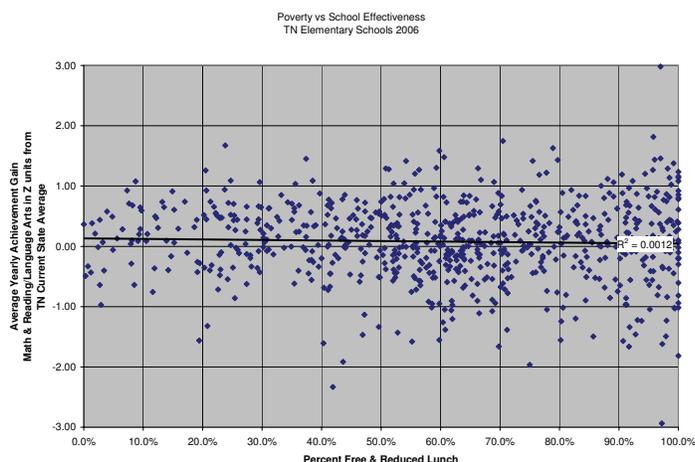
### Are schools in high-poverty areas less effective?

Based on an analysis done by ECF, **there is no correlation between poverty and school effectiveness rankings.**

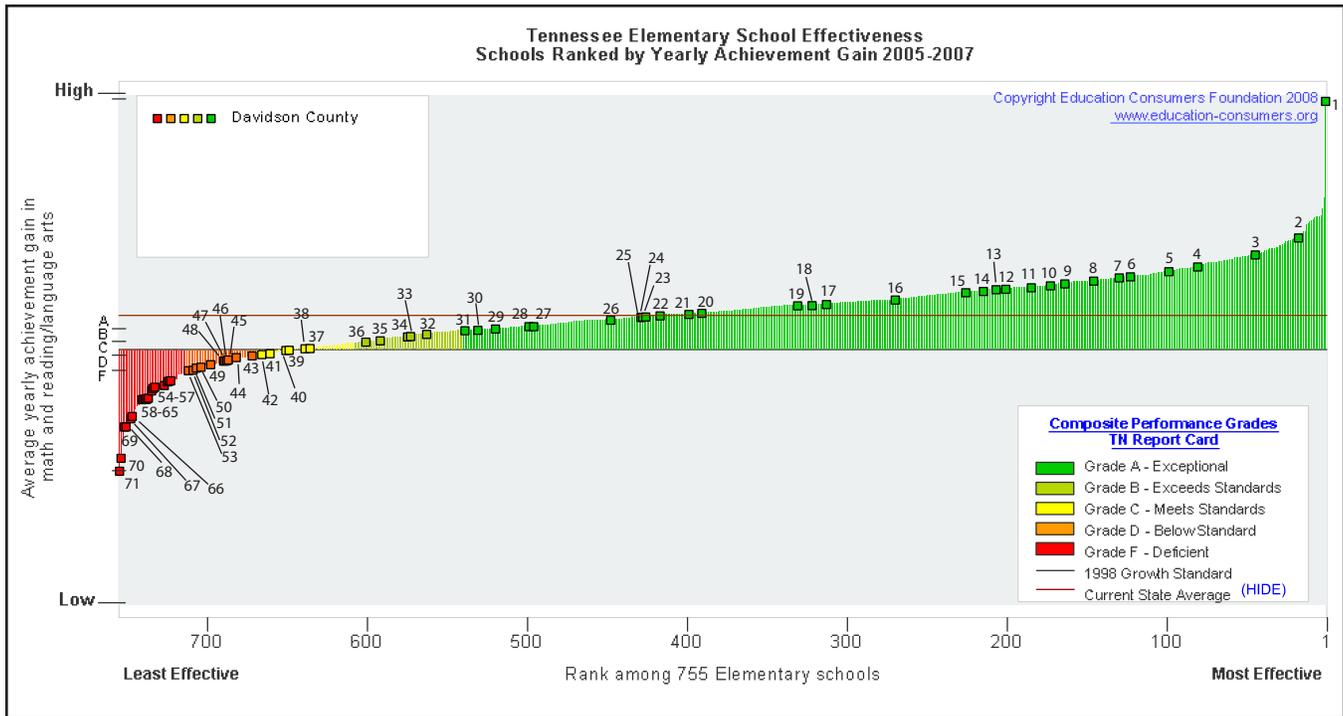
The chart at right shows value-added scores on the vertical axis and the percentages of students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program (a recognized indicator of poverty) on the horizontal axis. The distribution pattern of schools shows virtually no relation between the two.

Of course, the nature of the jobs that these schools must perform is different: schools in high-poverty areas must focus on getting children to grade level, while schools in more affluent areas must push children already at grade level to higher levels of performance.

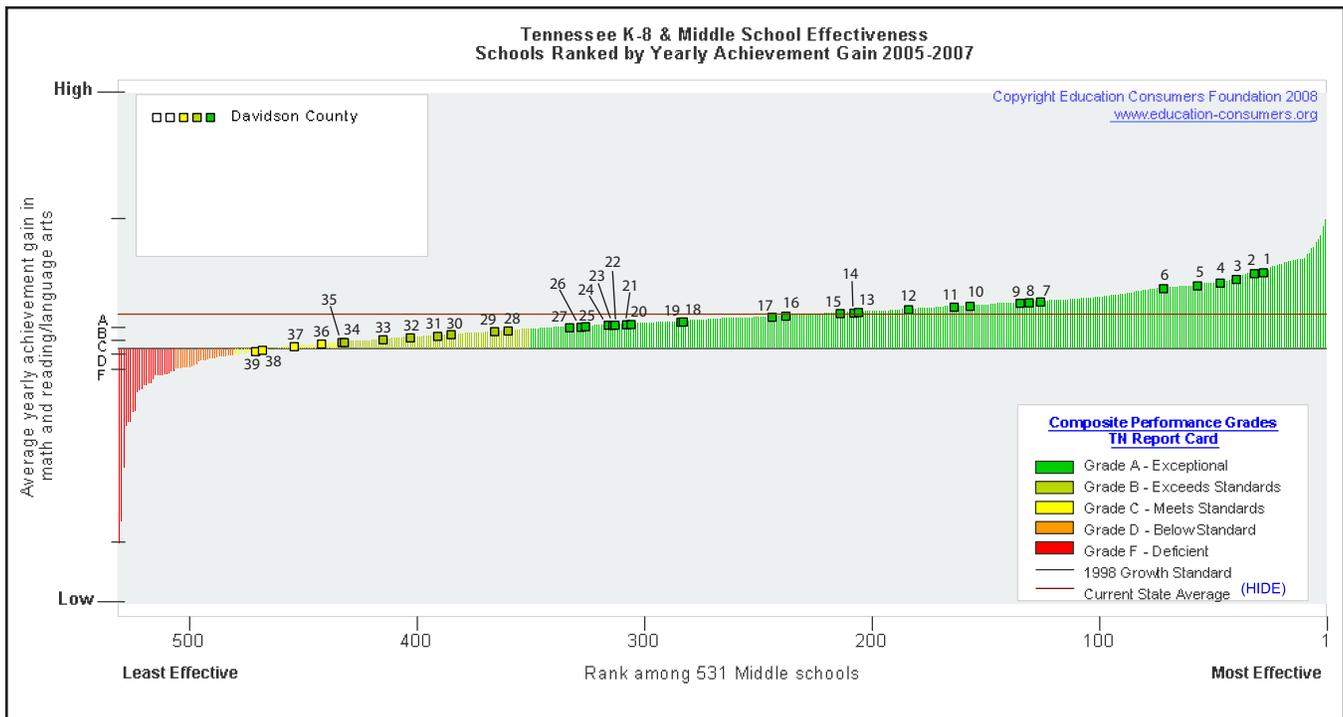
But the fact remains: schools can be remarkably effective at advancing student achievement regardless of students' starting points.



# Elementary Schools • Davidson County



# K-8/Middle Schools • Davidson County



Note: to see the names of Nashville schools highlighted on these charts, visit [www.mosteffectiveschools.org](http://www.mosteffectiveschools.org) and click on the Nashville link.

# What Makes a School Effective?

*ECF highlights the common practices of highly effective schools in new report*

The Education Consumers Foundation has released a report titled “Effective Schools, Common Practices,” which outlines 12 practices shared by six of Tennessee’s most effective elementary and middle school principals.

Year after year, the six schools studied for this report turn in some of the highest value-added gains in the state. After recognizing these schools repeatedly through its Value-Added Achievement Awards program, the Foundation wanted to know what made these schools so effective, and whether there were lessons to be learned by others interested in improving student performance.

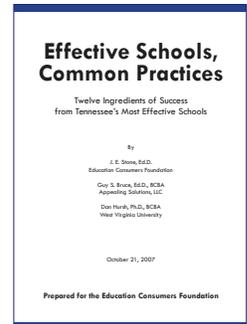
Interviews with school leaders revealed that, while these schools were geographically and socio-economically diverse, they shared a set of common practices – practices that created an environment where students could excel, and which could be adopted by any school interested in excellence. This report is the result.

The “Effective Schools, Common Practices” report lists the following 12 practices as being found at every school:

1. The top-performing schools use progress tests that assess the same skills that are tested on the state’s Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) examinations.
2. They require students to meet higher-than-minimum mastery criteria on student progress tests.
3. These schools employ practice-intensive learning activities that target the types of skills required by the examination.
4. The principal receives frequent reports of individual student progress with respect to attainment of Tennessee’s curriculum standards.
5. Teachers receive frequent reports on the progress of each of their students.

6. Teaching practices are adjusted when a student makes insufficient progress towards a curricular objective. Students simply are not permitted to quietly fail.
7. Student progress data is used to assess each teacher’s classroom effectiveness. Teaching performance is tracked continuously by the principal or by colleagues who are assigned to monitor teacher and student progress.
8. The principal and other teachers routinely work with struggling colleagues to improve their teaching skills.
9. Principals obtain supplemental budgetary support for the training and materials required to improve teacher performance.
10. Top-performing schools regularly inform parents about their child’s performance and seek to work with parents whenever children are progressing insufficiently.
11. They survey parents at least annually to assess satisfaction with the school’s services.
12. Top-performing schools have school-wide programs that reward positive social and academic student behavior. Principals monitor the success of these programs, collecting data on the number and type of student referrals for problem behavior.

The complete report, available at the Foundation’s website, provides examples of these practices in action at our six participating schools along with citations pointing to their basis in research.



*To download ECF’s “Effective Schools, Common Practices” report, visit:*

[www.education-consumers.org/tnproject/practices.htm](http://www.education-consumers.org/tnproject/practices.htm)



This report was published by the Education Consumers Foundation as a public service to parents and other education stakeholders in Davidson County, TN. For more information about education in Tennessee, to join our email list, or to learn how you can support our work, please visit us online at:

[www.education-consumers.org](http://www.education-consumers.org)