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Seeding Success is a diverse partnership representing K-12 institutions, not-for-profits, business, health, civic, faith and philanthropic organizations that are committed to fearlessly pursuing educational outcomes for children. Each organization in the partnership agrees to focus on a common set of goals and to work through a collaborative action process together with other sectors. We work with PeopleFirst to support Shelby County’s Cradle to Career vision for children. The Seeding Success Partnership collaborates to ensure every child graduates high school prepared for college, career and success in life. The partnership focuses its efforts on eight outcomes:

- Kindergarten readiness
- Third Grade Reading
- Middle School Math
- College and Career Readiness
- High School Graduation
- Opportunity Youth
- Post-secondary Access
- Post-secondary Attainment

More information Seeding Success can be found at: seeding-success.org
Seeding Success works with its partners to use data to identify what works to improve student outcomes. By using national and local data, the partnership looks at issues across key student outcomes, to decide what practices, policies, and actions will make the biggest difference. We are learning a lot about what it takes to successfully support students cradle to career. For example, attending pre-school prepares students to be ready for kindergarten, having satisfactory attendance in school (missing less than 9 days in the year) helps students achieve greater proficiency in every grade keeps them from dropping out, and students who have the supports they need to plan and prepare for post-secondary opportunities are much more likely to earn a credential or degree.

We are also finding that some things matter for multiple outcomes or, in fact, for all of them. This report focuses on one of those critical factors that affects all student outcomes, effective teaching and leadership. Effective teachers are the single most important school-based factor in student achievement. Exposure to effective teachers also seems to have long-term non-academic benefits for students like lower rates of teenage pregnancy, greater rates of college-going, and higher adult earnings.

We also know that non-school factors have a significant influence on student achievement. That is why we are working with our community to link support, health, and enrichment services for students and families with the most effective school-based practices for learning. Through the Seeding Success Partnership and many other great efforts collaborating in Shelby County, we are much closer to this reality than ever before.

This report highlights the work to date of our partner Shelby County Schools to ensure every student has access to effective teachers and leaders. It contains data showing progress for our students, but we still need to do more. It also makes specific recommendation to improve on this work to date, and to sustain it.

As a parent, community member, or policy leader your support for these efforts are important for continuing to improve student outcomes in Shelby County, especially now that many of SCS’s formal grant partnerships for supporting, recruiting, and retaining effective teachers and leaders are in their final year. The district and its partners will need to ignite community support to ensure that schools secure resources to sustain the strategic pillars of teacher & leader effectiveness. We are proud of the progress being made, but there is much left to be done. We hope this report encourages you to engage with teachers and schools across the community, and to lift your voice to support their efforts in Shelby County.

Mark Sturgis
Executive Director
Seeding Success
In November 2009, then-Memphis City Schools became one of four school districts nationwide to receive a seven-year Intensive Partnership Site grant with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The guiding vision of the work that has followed is to ensure that every student has access to highly effective teachers in every classroom, transforming our community by transforming our schools. The district’s proposal outlined four key strategies to improve teacher quality as well as the conditions for teaching on a systemic level:

1. Create a Common Definition of Effective Teaching  
2. Make Smarter Decisions About Who Teaches  
3. Better Support, Utilize and Compensate Teachers  
4. Improve School Culture and Leadership to Support Effective Teaching

Although the district—now Shelby County Schools (SCS)—has undergone many changes including a district merger and the movement of some schools to new municipal and state-led districts, these four strategies remain SCS’s core work, known as teacher & leader effectiveness (TLE). With extensive support from community partners, local funders, and the Shelby County Board of Education, the tenets of TLE have become a reality in classrooms across Shelby County. Over the past six years, the district and its educators have:

1) designed and implemented new performance evaluation tools for teachers and principals;  
2) made significant improvements to the teacher staffing process to attract and retain top educators;  
3) embedded coaches and other instructional support resources directly in schools; and  
4) established new professional development and data systems to develop principals as instructional leaders.

During that same time, the district has taken significant steps to sustain TLE within SCS and influence policies and practices well beyond county lines. Within the school system, the Shelby County Board of Education has adopted more than ten district policies that codify the values and practices of the four TLE strategies so that they can endure long after the formal grant partnership ends in June 2016. The original Intensive Partnership Site grant proposal also became the basis for key aspects of Tennessee’s 2010 Race to the Top legislation including using student data as part of educator evaluations, ensuring all teachers have multiple opportunities for observation feedback each year, and allowing teacher staffing and tenure decisions to be based on performance. Tennessee was among the first two states to receive federal Race to the Top funding based on the strength of these policies and achieved the highest rate of growth among all states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2013.

Now as the district works to sustain TLE fully in 2016 and beyond, these strategies have become embedded in SCS’s ten-year strategic plan, Destination 2025. Adopted by the Shelby County Board of Education in January 2015, the plan establishes ambitious goals for SCS students, namely that by 2025, 80% of seniors graduate college-or career-ready, 90% of students graduate on time, and 100% of college-or career-ready graduates enroll in post-secondary opportunities. With these goals and more rigorous standards on the horizon, the district must continue to develop and empower educators to meet the Destination 2025 promise.
TEACHER EVALUATION BEFORE TLE

TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN 2009-10

Ineffective
- Only 2% of teachers had unsatisfactory ratings on their evaluation while 62% of the students of tested teachers had negative growth

Effective
- 98% of teachers received satisfactory evaluations but only 38% of students of tested teachers had positive growth

TEACHER EVALUATIONS WERE:
- Based solely on principal observations
- Infrequent
- Compliance-driven
- Managed with paper files

EVALUATIONS WERE NOT:
- Connected to student outcomes
- Used to differentiate performance or professional development needs
Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM)

**Diagram:**
- Student Achievement: 35%
- Student Growth: 45%
- Observations: 5%
- Student Surveys: 15%
- Professionalism: 5%

**Change Evaluation Practices**

**THEN**

- Evaluations based solely on principal observations
- Tenured teachers observed once every 5 years
- Teachers simply rated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory
- Evaluations completed for state compliance purposes

**NOW**

- Evaluations based on five measures of performance
- All teachers observed multiple times each year
- Teachers are rated on a five-point performance scale
- Evaluations used for support, staffing, and compensation
Since 2010, the portion of teachers achieving more than a year of academic growth with students has more than doubled from 19% to 48%.

During that same time, student reading proficiency increased by **8 points** and math proficiency increased by **13 points**.

*Includes teachers grades 3-12 tested in Math, English, and Science

We have increased training efforts with observers to provide consistent, rigorous teacher feedback.

Student growth is measured by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) on a five-point scale.

**Level 1** – 2 TVAAS means students achieved less than a year of growth during the school year

**Level 3** TVAAS means students achieved roughly a year of growth

**Level 4 – 5 TVAAS** means students achieved more than a year of growth
In 2010, Tennessee was among the first two states in the country to receive federal Race to the Top funds. The funds were awarded based on new state legislation that was heavily influenced by Memphis’ Teacher Effectiveness Initiative proposal including:

- Including student growth & achievement data as part of teacher evaluations
- Ensuring all teachers have multiple opportunities for observation feedback each year
- Allowing teacher staffing and tenure decisions to be made based on performance

**LARGEST GROWTH ON 2013 NAEP**

National Assessment of Educational Progress, scale score growth across all four tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1 TENNESSEE</th>
<th>21.80</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2 INDIANA</td>
<td>14.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 WASHINGTON</td>
<td>13.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 HAWAII</td>
<td>12.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 FLORIDA</td>
<td>11.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 OREGON</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 IOWA</td>
<td>10.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 CALIFORNIA</td>
<td>10.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9 MINNESOTA</td>
<td>9.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10 NEW HAMPSHIRE</td>
<td>8.61</td>
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</table>

From 2011 to 2013, Tennessee Students grew more than students in any other state, making Tennessee the fastest improving state in the nation.
Teacher performance was not a factor in staffing decisions such as hiring, retention, tenure and dismissal.

Staffing practices were based on seniority and direct placement through the central office rather than school-based mutual consent hiring.

Mutual consent hiring means that the teacher and principal both agree to the teacher working at a given school. This differs from direct placement in which central office staff determine where the teacher will work. Teachers hired through mutual consent have consistently outperformed those hired through direct placement.

**HIRING TIMELINES:**

In 2009, hiring timelines were slow, limiting our ability to compete for the best candidates.

- Over 10% of hires were made after the first day of class, leaving over 10,000 students with substitutes
- The average turnaround time between submitting an application and being hired was 110 days

**TEACHER PERFORMANCE:**

- 40% of teachers left the district within their first three years.
- Fewer than 1% of teachers were considered for dismissal based on performance despite low student outcomes.

Schools struggled to retain and exit teachers based on performance.
FIVE STRATEGIES DRIVE STRATEGIC STAFFING:

**Talent Sourcing**
Recruit and screen new applicants to ensure that hiring managers are able to select from a robust applicant pool.

**School-Level Support**
Equip hiring managers with tools and resources to make timely, smart, strategic hiring decisions.

**District Policies & Practices**
Implement policies and practices that put effectiveness at the heart of human capital decisions.

**Differential Retention**
Equip managers with the tools to ensure that SCS retains its best employees and exit its lowest performers that are not improving.

**Customer Service**
Provide exceptional customer service that is responsive and courteous.

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**CHANGING STAFFING PRACTICES**

<table>
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<th>THEN</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hiring initiated in mid- to late-summer</td>
<td>Hiring initiated in February through early contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average application-to-hire turnaround is 110 days</td>
<td>Average application-to-hire turnaround is 10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring based on direct placement and seniority</td>
<td>Hiring based on mutual consent and TEM performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No district-wide retention or exit efforts based on performance</td>
<td>Extensive training and support for principals to manage talent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 TEM: Teacher Effectiveness Measure evaluates teachers on multiple measures of performance ratings 1-5 (see pg. 6) 3-5 fall within a satisfactory range

- We are retaining a much larger proportion of high-performing teachers than low-performing teachers.
- Principals receive teacher feedback and coaching about retention strategies for top performers.

**2014 TEACHER RETENTION**

- **Over 99%** of teacher hires made by the first day of classes
- **100%** of hires conducted through mutual consent
- **84%** of new hires earning a TEM 3, 4 or 5 since 2010

- **71%** of teachers hired to replace a TEM 1 – 2 teacher were rated TEM 3 or higher in 2013-14.
- **AVG. TEM 1.7**
  - TEM 1 and 2 Leavers
- **AVG. TEM 3.3**
  - New Hires
**TEACHER SUPPORT BEFORE TLE**

**TEACHER SUPPORT EFFORTS WERE:**

- Fragmented, not evaluated for impact and duplicative across the District
- Not aligned to performance evaluation or clear career pathways
- Not tailored to individualized needs and learning styles

**HIGH-PERFORMING TEACHER RESPONSES***

**CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

If you were provided with different career opportunities that allowed you to stay in the classroom, would you have chosen to stay longer?

- **NO**
  - 3%
- **PROBABLY NOT**
  - 15%
- **MAYBE**
  - 33%
- **YES**
  - 49%

Nationally, roughly 50% of top teachers may stay in classrooms longer with a higher salary.

**HIGHER SALARY**

If you were offered a higher salary due to your high performance, would you have chosen to stay longer?

- **NO**
  - 30%
- **PROBABLY NOT**
  - 18%
- **MAYBE**
  - 26%
- **YES**
  - 26%

Roughly 70% of top teachers may stay longer with better career opportunities.

*TNTP survey of an anonymous urban school district in 2011
# Teacher Support & Development Model

## District-Wide Support Model

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Team-Based</th>
<th>One-on-One</th>
<th>Independent Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District-wide training sessions for all schools to have a common understanding of the most important district priorities like TEM and new content standards</td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and small-group collaborations based on formative assessments and student data</td>
<td>Coaching support in which top-performing teachers provide feedback, mentoring and development strategies to new and middle-performing teachers</td>
<td>Individual growth through reflective practice video review, online courses and other self-directed forms of support</td>
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## Changing Supporting Practices

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Then</th>
<th>Now</th>
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<tr>
<td>Support fragmented and duplicative</td>
<td>Support managed through a unified Professional Development model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support not tailored to teacher need or performance</td>
<td>Support deployed based on TEM, content focus and individual need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support largely delivered through centralized workshops and trainings</td>
<td>Support provided in multiple school- and teacher leader-based formats</td>
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First-year teachers receiving coaching are out-performing struggling veteran teachers receiving coaching.

SCS will tailor its coaching support to new and middle-performing veteran teachers in the future.

Top-performers have access to multiple teacher leadership roles. In 2015-16 these will include:

- 50 Full-Release Math & Literacy Coaches Serving Multiple Schools
- 151 PLC Coaches Leading School-Based Team Sessions
- 200+ Teacher Mentors Coaching New Hires at Their Own Schools
In 2011, nearly the same proportion of schools had negative growth as had positive growth.

This means that there were just as many schools where students were falling behind as there were schools where students were improving academic performance.

- The principal role focused more on operations and non-instructional demands than on teaching & learning practices
- Principal performance and school culture were not consistently evaluated or utilized for feedback
- Current and prospective leaders had limited access to support opportunities such as formal coaching and principal pipeline development

Nearly 1 in 4 teachers (23%) left schools with the lowest principal satisfaction rate each year.
High quality school leaders are essential to student success.

**SUPPORT AND DEVELOP TEACHERS**
Great principals serve as the instructional leaders in their schools – ensuring that students have access to highly effective teachers.

**SET SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**
Great principals create a school culture that encourages great teaching and fosters student learning.

**CREATE THE VISION FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**
Great principals set high expectations for their students and staff and rally their team around this vision.

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### CHANGING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

<table>
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<th>THEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal role focused on operations and other non-instructional demands</td>
<td>Principal role focused on instructional leadership and managing talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal performance not evaluated consistently</td>
<td>All principals now evaluated annually with (TEAM-Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture data not used regularly for feedback</td>
<td>Teacher Insight survey conducted twice/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited access to support &amp; development opportunities</td>
<td>All principals now coached by (ILDs - Instructional Leadership Directors)</td>
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LEADER DEVELOPMENT NOW

SCHOOL-LEVEL TVAAS OVER TIME

Over the past three years, the percentage of schools with Level 4-5 TVAAS has increased by 11 points.

- Schools with Negative Growth
- Schools with Positive Growth

Teachers now provide survey feedback to principals twice a year about school culture. Results consistently correlate with teacher retention and student outcomes.

Teachers in schools with the strongest culture were **17 percentage points less likely** to consider leaving as those in schools with weak cultures.

The average instructional culture score across schools has increased steadily over time. Schools averaged an **8.3 out of 10.0** in 2015.
Since TLE’s inception, Memphis and Shelby County educators have accomplished a tremendous level of success in terms of student outcomes. In 2010, fewer than one in five teachers in tested subjects achieved the highest levels of growth with their students as measured by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). Five years later, that percentage more than doubled. In 2014, 48% of teachers in tested subjects achieved more than a year’s worth of growth with their students during one year of instruction. During that same time, the percentage of students who are proficient in reading increased by eight points and the percentage of students who are proficient in math increased by thirteen points.

Yet as the District’s Destination 2025 strategic plan emphasizes, the majority of Shelby County students still have a long way to go to be college-or career-ready over the next ten years. Although students have demonstrated significant growth over the past few years, in absolute terms, only 33% of students are currently reading on grade level and 40% are proficient in math based on TCAP standards. Like all districts in Tennessee, SCS is transitioning to more rigorous TNCore curriculum standards in 2015-16, meaning that many students could fall further behind without teachers and school leaders who are supported and well-prepared for this instructional shift.

DESTINATION 2025: AN OVERVIEW

During the 2014-15 school year, Shelby County Schools’ board and district leadership adopted ambitious goals and set forth a comprehensive ten-year strategic plan known as Destination 2025. The goals of this plan define SCS’s successes in terms of student outcomes that will lead to a highly-skilled workforce, economic stability in the Shelby County community and improved overall well-being for more students and families.

By 2025:

• 80% of high school seniors will graduate from SCS college or career-ready
• 90% of high school students will graduate from SCS on time; and
• 100% of graduates who are college-or career-ready will enroll in a post-secondary opportunity

By achieving these goals, Shelby County has the opportunity to produce an additional 50,000 graduates who are college- or career-ready and able to meet the demands of a rapidly changing workforce over the next ten years. In addition to establishing long-term student outcomes, Destination 2025 identifies five major priorities that SCS will align resources and partners to in order to meet its goals:

• Priority 1: Strengthen Early Literacy
• Priority 2: Improve Post-Secondary Readiness
• Priority 3: Develop Teachers, Leaders and Central Office to Drive Student Success
• Priority 4: Expand High-Quality School Options
• Priority 5: Mobilize Family and Community Partners

From strengthening early literacy to expanding high-quality school options, SCS teachers and school leaders are essential to the ultimate success of Destination 2025. Thus, one of the district’s major priorities is to continue to develop teachers and leaders—as well as central office staff—to drive student success. It is this priority that reaffirms the work of teacher & leader effectiveness to support, develop, attract and retain highly effective teachers and school leaders across all schools in the years to come.
TLE & DESTINATION 2025

TLE in 2015-16

During the 2015-16 school year, SCS will continue to implement key aspects of TLE that have been long-embedded in schools including strategic staffing to attract and retain top teachers, educator coaching and professional development, and providing regular feedback and performance evaluations. Additionally, the district has identified new areas of focus based on student need and the changing education landscape:

• Preparing for the New TNCore Curriculum Standards – As with all districts across the state of Tennessee, SCS will implement new TNCore curriculum standards in 2015-16. Although this transition is necessary for students to become truly college-or career-ready, it will require significant effort at all levels of the organization. Students will need to adjust to more rigorous standards that will be assessed online while teachers and school leaders will need to adapt their instructional strategies to prepare their classrooms. In order to help educators adapt to the shift, SCS will continue to invest in school-embedded coaching support for teachers and principals. In 2015-16, this will include 50 full-time literacy and math coaches to provide content-focused guidance for teachers, mentors to help new teachers acclimate to the profession and Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs) to support principals throughout the school year.

• Attracting and Retaining Our Best Educators – Recent national and local trends have shown declining enrollment in traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs, reducing the overall pool of new teacher candidates. Moreover, competition for top teachers and school leaders is especially steep in Shelby County, which contains six municipal districts and the state-run ASD in addition to SCS. In this highly competitive education landscape, Shelby County must take an aggressive approach in attracting and retaining the very best classroom and school leaders. Utilizing feedback from educators, the district will design a compensation system that is competitive with surrounding school options and built to retain top performing educators while rewarding them for their impact on students. The district will also leverage the coaching and instructional leadership opportunities above and the development of an internal principal pipeline program to cultivate a deep level of educator talent and improve retention outcomes among teachers by offering stronger educator career pathways.

• Sustaining Our Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Resources – Over the past six years, SCS’s teacher & leader effectiveness work has been made possible in large part due to grants with local philanthropies and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that will formally end in June 2016. With the support of its school board, SCS has already embedded a significant portion of TLE resources in its 2015-16 budget, particularly in the area of professional development for teachers and school leaders. However, the District and its partners will need to ensure the core TLE work is sustained beyond the life of these grant opportunities, as highly effective teachers and school leaders are the single-most important factors to students’ success in the classroom.

“Every child is different, every situation is different. What might work for one might not work for another. So you have to notice and adapt your teaching strategies to the kids...not them adapt to you.”

- Augustus Alexeas, Whitehaven High
With more rigorous curriculum standards and ambitious Destination 2025 student goals on the horizon, SCS’s need to attract, develop and retain highly talented teachers and school leaders has never been greater. The tremendous growth in student and teacher performance over the past several years has given the district and its educators real momentum to tackle the challenges ahead; yet sustaining the core work of teacher & leader effectiveness will require concerted effort from both SCS and its community partners. Although sustainability is often framed in terms of long-term financial viability, there are multiple dimensions of work needed to ensure that TLE endures as a foundational approach for improving student and Shelby County community outcomes:

• Policy – Codifying TLE values and practices in policy has been a strength of SCS’s progress to date. Following the school merger in 2013, the Shelby County Board of Education adopted more than ten district policies in support of TLE including those related to staffing, tenure, professional development, and evaluation for both teachers and school leaders. Although still in design, SCS’s new compensation system may require a district policy framework that outlines any pay structures tied to teacher performance, hard-to-staff subjects and schools.

• Educator Support – Some aspects of TLE have been largely well-received by educators such as school-embedded coaching, professional development and strengthening school leadership. Other aspects such as performance evaluation and compensation reform have had more mixed reception, due in part to requiring student data to be factored into evaluations for non-tested teachers and tying those evaluations to monetary rewards. The district will need to continue collaborating with community and teacher leaders to address these concerns where feasible while also advocating for strong performance and compensation structures that can improve teacher retention outcomes.

• Community Support – When TLE first launched in the Shelby County community in 2009, the effort was marked by widespread support among local community partners and funders. This support was instrumental to the district’s ability to enact bold changes in its teacher development, staffing, evaluation and retention practices and produce impressive student results over the past several years. Now that many of SCS’s formal grant partnerships for TLE are in their final year, the district and its partners will need to reignite that same level of community support to ensure that SCS secures the resources to sustain the strategic pillars of teacher & leader effectiveness. This support is especially needed for the resources that have the deepest impact on teacher development and retention outcomes.

“She inspired me to do more with my work and she didn’t really accept anything less from us...she believed that we can go farther than what we believed in ourselves.”

- Dorian Clark, Overton High
There is nothing more important at the school level, than for a child to have a great teacher year over year. To put this in perspective, nearly 2/3 rds of our students are more than a year behind in literacy skills. To help those students catch up and excel, they will need teachers, who can deliver more learning in a year than expected. Since 2010, the portion of teachers achieving more than a year of academic growth with students has more than doubled from 19% to 48%. This is an impressive improvement, but still many students who need these teachers the most, do not have access to them. While the community works to strengthen high quality supports for families and students, we must also continue to demand and support efforts to attract, develop, and retain the most effective teachers and leaders we can.
Seeding Success would like to thank Shelby County Schools, especially Jessica Lotz, Strategy & Innovation Advisor for providing the data for this report.

1 Gormley, W., Gayer, T., Phillips, D., and Dawson, B., 2004a. The Effects of Oklahoma’s Universal Pre-K on School Readiness. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center for Research on Children in the U.S - See more at: http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Pre-kindergarten/Pre-Kindergarten/Pre-kindergarten-What-the-research-shows.html#sthash.RP3DmCpU.dpuf


7 http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/10/22/09enroll.h34.html