



POSITION DESCRIPTION

Director of Policy and Research

“We never believed it was acceptable for Tennessee to be ranked in the bottom five to 10 states in the country in education. And we don’t believe today that we should be below the national average. But what we have seen is that change is possible. Our students can grow. It’s happening in Tennessee, and it can happen all across our nation.”

--Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, November 9, 2013

Introduction

In recent years, Tennessee has made significant progress in advancing a bold education reform plan, and is a leader in the nation in efforts to dramatically improve student achievement. Tennessee reached a significant milestone in 2013; according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, also known as the Nation’s Report Card): Tennessee is the fastest improving state in the nation in student achievement across 4th and 8th grade reading and math, following only the District of Columbia. In 2015, Tennessee continued that progress and is now ranked in the top 25 of states in 4th grade math. While Tennessee has made significant gains, students still score below the national average. Since 2009, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) has played a critical role in advancing student achievement. SCORE is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organization founded by former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, based at Vanderbilt University’s John Seigenthaler Center, and dedicated to the goal that every student in Tennessee graduates from high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. SCORE works to drive collaboration across the state on policy and practice to ensure all students graduate high school prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. We support student success across Tennessee by insisting on high expectations for what students can achieve, empowering people to lead the change for our students, and fostering a culture of innovation. For more information on SCORE, please [click here](#).

Position Overview

SCORE’s Director of Policy and Research (DPR) plays a critical role in advancing the organization’s work and Tennessee’s efforts to improve student achievement. The Director leads a team of individuals in assessing where, how, and why statewide reforms are – or are not – meeting the ambitious goals that Tennessee has set for student growth and achievement, and by proactively identifying and assessing ways to overcome barriers to reform through state policy and practice. Specifically, the DPR will 1) take a leadership role in developing SCORE’s annual policy agenda, 2) serve as a leader, partner, and trusted voice in statewide education policy discussions with stakeholders, 3) design, develop, and manage policy and research projects, reports, and initiatives to advance SCORE’s policy agenda and theory of change, and 4) manage and lead the organization’s talented Policy and Research team to execute these projects.

Key Responsibilities

Key responsibilities for the Director of Policy and Research position include, but are not limited to:

Leading SCORE’s policy and research efforts:

- Proactively leading the development of SCORE’s annual statewide policy agenda, including identifying and scaling new and innovative policy ideas and reforms that are aligned with SCORE’s theory of change;
- Designing, managing, and overseeing all policy and research projects needed to advance SCORE’s policy agenda with a relentless commitment to excellence, including but not limited to:
 - SCORE’s annual report, the *State of Education in Tennessee*
 - Policy memos and other key educational reports
 - Major research initiatives aligned with SCORE’s theory of change
 - Analysis of all education policy initiatives from the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee State Board of Education, and Tennessee General Assembly;
- Writing blog posts and opinion pieces on new policy issues and considerations;
- Serving as the organization’s lead outward-facing policy and research expert; and
- Working proactively with SCORE’s Chief of Staff and other directors to identify opportunities for collaboration and to ensure policy and research efforts complement other work streams across the organization.

Ensuring SCORE’s advocacy, policy, and communications efforts are informed by research and best-practice:

- Managing, motivating, and coaching the organization’s high-performing Policy and Research team and the work driven by its members by setting strategic direction, establishing clear goals, assigning and adjusting key projects, and fostering a collaborative team relationship;
- Recruiting and managing external consultants as needed to support on SCORE policy and research projects;
- Building and sustaining a robust network of national education policy experts who advise and inform SCORE’s work; and
- Leading organizational efforts to ensure that all communications, advocacy, and policy work is grounded in sound research and data.

Serving as a statewide expert on key education reform policy topics:

- Developing and maintaining strong relationships with policy leads at other state and national organizations, including at the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee State Board of Education, Tennessee Educational Research Alliance, and Peabody College of Education at Vanderbilt University, among others;
- Providing strategic and trusted thought leadership on education policy issues and priorities affecting Tennessee in partnership with external partners and the organizations represented on SCORE’s Steering Committee;
- Having a deep knowledge of current state and federal legislation, policy, and research and being able to proactively identify policy opportunities that Tennessee leaders might capitalize on to drive student achievement improvements;
- Identifying policy developments that should be shared with SCORE stakeholders and collaborating with the advocacy and educator engagement teams to share these developments (i.e., through webinars, convenings, conferences, etc.); and
- Representing SCORE at state and national conferences, on committees, and in discussions with national education partners.

Reporting Relationships

The Director of Policy and Research will report to SCORE's President. The Policy and Research team that the Director will manage includes a Senior Policy and Research Analyst, a Policy and Research Analyst, and at least two graduate policy and research fellows.

Candidate Requirements

SCORE is looking for an innovative, inquisitive, intellectually curious, and experienced policy leader with a passion for improving education in Tennessee and across the nation. The Director must have a track record of managing and coaching a team of diverse individuals and be able to work in close and productive collaboration with SCORE colleagues and with public officials, policy leaders, and educators at the local, state, and national level. Above all, this leader must also have a commitment to equity and excellence for all students.

Additionally, the successful candidate will bring the following **experience** to the role:

- a proven track record of work in the field of education policy
- at least 5-10 years of professional experience, at least 5 years of which should be relevant experience in the field of education policy
- a strong network of national and state-based education policy and research experts
- a deep knowledge of major K-12 education policy issues at both the state and federal level
- prior management experience
- a graduate degree in public policy, public administration, or education policy

Additionally, the successful candidate will possess the following **skills**:

- capable of managing multiple tasks and people simultaneously in a fast-paced, rapid-growth, and high-intensity environment where collaboration, optimism, courage, innovation, and excellence are highly valued
- the ability to initiate and lead large and complex policy and research projects
- the ability to read, analyze, and synthesize educational data and research
- the ability to both analyze education policy and be adept at turning policy ideas into legislative and policy proposals
- mindfulness around how to advance student-focused policy in particular political contexts.
- the ability to proactively identify policy and research trends, identify gaps in the field, and activate an appropriate policy, research, or implementation response
- superb writing skills
- rigorous strategic thinking and outstanding analytical skills
- excellent communication skills
- managing, providing feedback to, and leading the development of diverse individuals who work both within and outside the organization

Additionally, the successful candidate will reflect the following **attributes**:

- comfort with regularly giving and receiving feedback
- the confidence required to inspire and manage a team of highly intelligent, strong performers
- alignment with SCORE's core values – collaboration, optimism, courage, excellence, and innovation – contextual descriptions of which [can be found here](#)

Compensation

Compensation will be competitive based on the candidate's previous experience and credentials and will include SCORE's robust package of benefits.

TO APPLY:

The executive search team at [*Bellwether Education Partners*](#) is leading the search. Inquiries and applications, comprising a resume and letter of interest, should be sent to: **Crystal Combs, Senior Consultant, at scoredpr@bellwethereducation.org**.

Bellwether Education Partners is a nonprofit dedicated to helping education organizations in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors become more effective in their work and achieve dramatic results, especially for high-need students. Our [Talent Services](#) practice identifies, places, and supports education leaders through comprehensive executive searches, customized search advisory services, and individual coaching. We also partner with clients to build talent-ready organizations where diverse teams can work, develop, and thrive.