

## **Making a Case for a Skilled Workforce**

A skilled and educated workforce is needed to encourage businesses and industries to locate and expand in Morristown-Hamblen County. New businesses and industries can provide jobs (offering a living wage that includes fringe benefits such as health insurance and long-term security) as well as taxes to improve the overall quality of life. The economy is now global; and unless we change to meet the challenges of this new economic reality, our quality of life as a community will continue to fall behind other local, state, and international economies.

In early 2007 Tennessee received a grade of “F” for Truth in Advertising on the US Chamber of Commerce’s State Education Comparison Report Card. The report stated that “There is no truth in advertising for Tennessee school standards. The reality is that students scoring at 79% are actually at 39% when compared to national standards (NAEP).”

- Tennessee’s Governor and the Tennessee Department of Education realized that many of the state’s high school graduates are not ready for post-secondary education and the workplace, and they responded to the Chamber of Commerce’s report by leading the charge to provide rigor and relevance to Tennessee’s teaching and learning process.
- Tennessee began its effort by joining the American Diploma Project (ADP) created in 1996 by the national Governors Association and business to help states raise academic standards to better prepare young people for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship. ADP does this by providing states with a blueprint for making the standards more rigorous and graduation requirements more in line with the demands of higher education and work. Tennessee became the 33rd state to join ADP.
- The effort began by engaging statewide educators, and business and industry leaders to identify the necessary skills and knowledge for aligning high school curricula and assessment standards with post-secondary and workplace environments. The result was the Tennessee Diploma Project that included passage by the Tennessee Board of Education on January 25, 2008, of new graduation standards which became effective at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. These standards focus on producing students who:
  - o are workplace and/or college ready,
  - o have deeper understanding of math and science and their relationship to technology (STEM),
  - o can work cooperatively in groups, and
  - o are ready to demonstrate responsibilities in their own lives and in service to their community.