

Abstract

Knox County Schools' (KCS) will implement **Think About It: SySTEMatiCally Preparing Students for the Workforce (TAI)** in 5 KCS (Knoxville, Tennessee) elementary schools and scale-up to implement within 10 elementary locations in years 3-5 of Early-Phase funding. As a response to the funding opportunity and challenges experienced in Knox County, KCS will work to support high-needs students with programming backed by a rationale (Absolute Priority One) and impacting high-needs students through Field-Initiated Innovations – Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) Education, with a Particular Focus on Computer Science (Absolute Priority 3). TAI will work with schools to identify, recruit, and engage 100 5th grade students in Year 1 and an estimated 570 total 3rd – 5th grade students; selection of scale-up schools will be largely determined by initial evaluation. High-needs students may include minorities, economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, or disabled. The independent evaluation will be conducted by partner organization, WestEd. Support has been garnered from local STEM-related industry partners.

With a continual increase in demand for STEM-capable employees, STEM education is of paramount importance to students across our nation, including those in Knox County, Tennessee. KCS offers and encourages STEM education; however, the availability varies greatly across the district. TAI will incorporate dedicated and other highly qualified staff to implement a STEM Institute including three week-long Institutes, two two-day Institutes, high school student Mentors, and engaged Industry Partners focused to engage and support our high-needs students with STEM education including a focus on Computer Science.