

# Empowering Education in Tennessee

The power of collaboration and partnership helped two schools located on the northside of Memphis exit school improvement status for the first time in 15 years. Hawkins Mill Elementary and Trezevant High School in Memphis-Shelby County, Tennessee embarked on a transformative journey under the Tennessee legislature’s School Turnaround Pilot Program Act of 2021.

Both schools had struggled with chronic absenteeism, low academic performance, and ranked in the state’s bottom 5%. Through this pilot program they partnered with education non-profit, Cognia, to begin a path of empowerment and improvement.

Through this partnership both schools demonstrated:

- Double digit gains in academic achievement
- Growth rates among the highest statewide
- Significant decreases in chronic absenteeism
- Exited school improvement status

DATA IMPACTS	HAWKINS MILL ELEMENTARY	TREZEVANT HIGH SCHOOL
<b>ELA Academic Achievement %</b> (School year 20–21 thru school year 22–23)	↑ 16.1%	↑ 12.1%
<b>ELA Growth Rate</b> (2022–23)	98 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	92 <sup>th</sup> Percentile
<b>Reductions in Chronic Absenteeism</b> (School year 20–21 to school year 21–22)	CUT BY 53.42%	CUT BY 23.2%
HIGHLIGHTS		
<b>Removed from school improvement designation</b> (First time in 15 years)	✓	✓
<b>Identified as a Reward School</b> (2023)	✓	
<b>Met minimum state graduation rate</b> (First time since 2011–12)		✓

## Key Components of Success

- **Partnership, Trust, and Collective Efficacy** Strategically layering and coordinating supports alongside district-led improvement initiatives (iZone), Cognia fostered a cohesive multi-pronged approach for improvement. By utilizing new and existing community partnerships to support student learning they emphasized the importance of a collective efficacy of schools, districts, and community.
- **Strategic Planning and Action Plans** Through external evaluations, needs assessments, and collaborative conversations, Cognia assisted both schools in the development of strategic action plans with focused goals.
- **Professional Development and Coaching** Through job-embedded professional development, educators were better able to align teaching practices with state standards and foster effective communication with students’ families. Cognia facilitated expert guidance and support to enhance classroom practices and empower instructional leaders.
- **Capacity Building and Sustainability** By building capacity for continuous improvement through ongoing progress monitoring and evaluation of results, both schools have demonstrated the ability to continue the journey towards excellence.

---

## Data Impacts of the Turnaround Pilot

From academic achievement to reduced chronic absenteeism, the data illustrate a compelling narrative of positive change for both Hawkins Mill Elementary and Trezevant High School under Cognia's guidance and the collaborative efforts of the iZone initiative. Both schools demonstrated significant growth, surpassing expectations in multiple student performance metrics and exiting state school improvement status.

### Improvements in Academic Achievement

Hawkins Mill Elementary and Trezevant High School had significant progress in Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) success rates.

- **Hawkins Mill Elementary nearly quadrupled its ELA proficiency rate from 5.6% to 21.7% in just two years.**
- Trezevant High School had a remarkable increase in ELA proficiency from 6.1% to 16.9%

### Positive Trends in Academic Growth

Both schools consistently improved their Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Composite scores.

- Hawkins Mill achieved the highest possible score of 5, two consecutive years.
- In 2023, both schools surpassed their peers in terms of growth and achievement.
- **Hawkins Mill demonstrated greater ELA growth than 98% of all TN elementary schools.**
- Trezevant's English II growth was higher than 92% of all TN high schools.

### Effective Reduction of Chronic Absenteeism

Despite nationwide increases in chronic absenteeism, both schools experienced **significant reductions in chronic absenteeism rates.**

- Hawkins Mill Elementary cut in half chronic absenteeism rates, decreasing from 29.2% to 13.6%, leading to increased student engagement and academic success.
- While high schools experiencing increased absenteeism, Trezevant's rate decreased to 29.4% by the end of 2021-22, despite being as high as 60.9% just a few years earlier.

### Graduation Rate Growth

Trezevant High School achieved its **highest graduation rate in over 10 years**, surpassing the state minimum rate for the first time since 2011-12.

### Building Capacity for Continuous Improvement

These two schools are located in an area which has been the focus of numerous intervention and turnaround efforts over the past 20 years. The success of Hawkins Mill and Trezevant serves as a testament to the power of relentless dedication, trusted partnerships, and strategic planning, in transforming low-performing schools and paving the way for a brighter future for their students and communities. By understanding and addressing the unique challenges of each school, Cognia significantly contributed to the overall success of the School Turnaround Pilot Program and provided model practices to further expand the program's impact. Read more details in the [full case study](#).