

Partnership Advisory Council

Eriksson College of Education, Austin Peay State University

The Partnership Advisory Council (PAC) convenes twice each year to align the Eriksson College of Education's work with the priorities of our partnering school districts, including CMCSS, Cheatham, Dickson, Robertson, Sumner, Metro Nashville, and a growing number of rural and River Ribbon partners. Since its early years, the Council has operated as a candid, relational working group, anchored by recurring SWOT analyses, program updates, and open roundtable discussions. The overall goals remain centered on collaborative problem-solving: districts voice workforce needs, the College responds with programmatic action, and both sides track results together. Throughout the 2022 and 2023 meetings, the Council established its rhythm, surfacing priorities such as Grow Your Own (GYO) expansion, dual-endorsement options, job-embedded licensure flexibility, and more transparent communication, which have continued to shape the agenda to this day.

Work over the past two years has been especially focused on strengthening the educator pipeline, expanding high-need licensure pathways, and deepening district alignment. In 2024–2025, Council conversations emphasized mentor teacher selection and training, induction practices, recruitment, and the launch of the University Partner Path (UPP) for aspiring school leaders. Partners reported that GYO had reached its largest graduating cohort (August 2024) and that the Aspiring Administrator Preparation Network (AAPN) had provided grant-funded scholarships for roughly 700 educators statewide by early 2025. In 2025–2026, the direction sharpened toward strategy and performance: the Fall 2025 meeting introduced professional development opportunities through the Center for Rural Education, the Jack Hunt STEM Center, and the Furniture Connection Ed Tech Studio, while the February 2026 meeting produced a formal six-month strategic plan addressing enrollment stabilization, clinical readiness, Praxis performance, GYO sustainability, partner communication, and morale in the profession.

Several concrete decisions have emerged directly from Council feedback. First, in response to repeated district requests for faster, more affordable special education preparation, the College launched the Integrated Early Childhood/SPED dual-licensure program (beginning Fall 2025) and is developing a GYO SPED K–8 Interventionist pathway announced in 2026. Second, following 2024–2025 discussions about access and flexibility, the College expanded certificate options (ELL, Physical Education, CTE) and adopted grade-span licensure flexibility, while moving AAPN to a one-year, fully online model with significantly reduced student cost. Third, after Spring 2026, partner feedback on responsiveness and clinical alignment, the College adopted a 48-hour communication standard, assigned district liaisons, committed to opening a Center for Literacy and to infusing trauma-informed teaching in Fall 2026, and launched remote and Saturday options to expand access to teacher preparation.

Taken as a whole, the Council's trajectory reflects a college that is listening carefully, acting quickly, and positioning itself as a partnership-centered, data-informed educator preparation provider for Middle Tennessee, building from the relationship-first tone of its earliest meetings toward a mature, strategy-driven model that continues to evolve with district needs.