



Welcome to

Elizabethton High School

Elizabethton, Tennessee

A vision for the future of high school—
designed by students, for students

How They Came to Be

Elizabethton High School's XQ Super School Journey

Change at Elizabethton High School began when a sociology class of 23 students decided to join the XQ Super School competition. Guided by their teachers, they researched the history of public high school in America, dug deep into the XQ materials, and authored a plan for a transformed, student-centered high school. Their school design didn't originally win, but that didn't stop them. EHS staff started with two small pilot courses in 2017 that later evolved into a school-wide transformation of teaching and learning in what is now one of the most forward-thinking high schools in America.

In a rural Tennessee town with a struggling economy, three teachers invited their students to dream big. Together, they planted a seed whose growth could transform a district and revitalize a community.



Discover Elizabethton

Elizabethton High School piloted their plan for the Bartleby Program with two courses: one on community improvement, in which students addressed local needs, and one on entrepreneurship, which came with seed money to start a student-run business. The Bartleby program was such a success in fulfilling students' desire for meaningful and purposeful learning that the district expanded it to reach all high school students. At EHS, you'll now find dual enrollment partnerships with top colleges in northeastern Tennessee, 20 new project-based courses, and a state-of-the-art virtual and augmented reality lab where students can explore how industries use this technology now and in the future.

Piloted initially with just 30 11th and 12th graders, the Bartleby Program expanded across Elizabethton High School for all 800 students beginning in 2018-19.



Elizabethton High Design Features

1. A seed for Schoolwide Transformation

This innovative, interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning may have started with just two courses, but it made a big impression. Adults throughout the community started seeing high school students as valuable contributors and students started seeing school as more engaging and meaningful. Interest in the program grew organically as students visibly evolved into poised and confident young people excelling as leaders. Interest led to demand and demand led to several new courses. These new project-based, passion-driven courses include Investigations in Science, Multicultural Service-Learning, Three-Dimensional Foundations in Art, AdVentures in Business, Engineering, Advanced Creative Writing, The Art of Arguing, and Research Institute. Students are also able to take dual-enrollment courses with several regional higher education partners and have an opportunity to receive scholarships from several partner universities through the [Bartleby Diploma Seal](#).



Alex Campbell

Teacher and Bartleby Program Co-Founder

“You can never predict what jobs are going to exist or what job skills are going to be needed in 100 years. But if (students) love learning and they’re passionate about what they’re doing, they’ll be able to pick up whatever they need to be successful.”



Elizabethton High Design Features

2. Elevating student voice

There's a deep foundational belief at the core of Elizabethton High School that students who are invested in the community will create a bright future for their city or make a positive contribution anywhere they live. Faced with a struggling economy and increasingly empty storefronts, three staff members saw a need to develop students with self-purpose, agency, and creativity so they could advocate and carve out new industries aligned with their own interests and passions. To develop youth to become change agents of their community, it was only appropriate that students were tasked with the proposal to reimagine high school. Elizabethton High School developed the Bartleby Program pilot in 2017-18 that has now grown across the high school. Fulfilling their promise to elevate student voice, the local school board now includes a student liaison position elected by students. Students also regularly present their ideas to the school board.



Hi, I'm McKenna.

"I initially just thought of this program as a resource to gain volunteer hours, but it completely changed how I think education should be. By having full ownership of my education, I learned skills that couldn't be found in a classroom but only through application. This is helping me a lot now that I'm in college."



Elizabethton High Design Features

3. Powerful project-based learning

Teachers at EHS are encouraged to create collaborative, inquiry-based projects as part of their approach to rethinking high school. They've invested in training and ongoing support for implementing high-quality project-based learning (PBL) to ensure the projects they create are rigorous and meaningful. Projects include businesses developed in the Entrepreneurship class and in the Business Management Career Technical Education program, children's storybooks developed in College Prep English, podcasts preserving local veterans' stories in the integrated English III and US History classes, plays developed in Drama in conjunction with Barter Theatre, and a genetics study conducted in Biology. Students present and display their projects at an open-house at the end of each school year. This encourages the ongoing involvement of community partners who are invited to sponsor new projects, serve on judging panels, and mentor students as industry experts.



Dustin Hensley

Media Specialist and Bartleby Program Co-Founder

“When we talk about rethinking high school, students and teachers and the community have to be a part of the conversation. Otherwise, it’s just another program with a catchy acronym and tagline that’s doomed to fail.”



Elizabethton High Design Features

4. Empowering students as entrepreneurs

EHS educators are intentional about showing students what is possible—beyond the opportunities they may have originally imagined for themselves—and then helping them build the knowledge and skills necessary to take advantage of those expanded opportunities. In the Entrepreneurship course, local business people work with students as mentors throughout the semester. To gain a spot in the class, students have to pitch a business idea. Each student is eligible for \$500 in seed money to start their business. One student, who was already working as a graphic designer, was so impressed he was hired by two members of the selection committee on the spot! Another student won \$1000 in First Tennessee Development District’s Shark Tank with her idea to start a delivery service of farm-fresh, locally grown foods to customers’ homes. She was one of nearly 300 participating from eight counties. During Pitch Night, student entrepreneurs showcased their businesses. All five featured at the end of the school year were operating and generating profits.



Hi, I’m Veronica.

“I started coding when I was seven with simple animations and now I make my own video games. I spent the past four summers teaching coding to young learners at East Tennessee State University. Working with a professor, I wrote the curriculum, which I hope will be adopted by others. After graduating EHS, I plan to study computer science and land a job with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, working on artificial intelligence or psychological profiling.”



Theory Into Action

Student work: Connecting and creating to understand genetics

A recent genetics project at EHS challenged students to learn, create, and connect to master required standards in Biology. This rigorous project integrated technology, various literacies, and deep collaboration among students, with the goal of learning science in a meaningful way that wasn't intimidating. After organizing into groups, students selected genetic diseases and conditions then interviewed researchers, teachers, health professionals, and those affected with these conditions. Students created infographics, incorporating technology like QR codes, to share their research. They showed the development of scientific understanding over time and provided evidence about human impact from their personal interviews. The infographic posters were then printed and displayed in the science wing to inform others about genetic conditions.

State Standards Met:

- ✓ BIO1.LS3.1 Compare and contrast the processes of sexual and asexual reproduction, identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- ✓ BIO1.LS3.2 Explain how protein formation results in phenotypic variation and discuss how changes in DNA can lead to somatic or germline mutations.
- ✓ BIO1.LS3.3 Through pedigree analysis, identify patterns of trait inheritance to predict family member genotypes. Use mathematical thinking to predict the likelihood of various types of trait transmission.
- ✓ BIO1.LS1.4 Demonstrate how DNA sequence information is decoded through transcriptional and translational processes within the cell in order to synthesize proteins. Examine the relationship of structure and function of various types of RNA and the importance of this relationship in these processes.

Skills for Future-Ready Graduates Met:

- ✓ Information and digital literacy
- ✓ Communication and collaboration
- ✓ Self-awareness and adaptability
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Adaptability
- ✓ Innovation and imagination



Sheri Nelson

Assistant Principal

“Equity is giving each student what he or she needs. It is not giving everyone the same thing. We need to ensure that students are taking advantage of rigorous opportunities that meet their specific interests and needs.”

What do graduates need to know and be able to do?

The staff at EHS wants graduates to be “well-prepared to be community leaders that engage and excel in an ever-changing future. Through creativity and collaboration, our students are equipped to solve issues on a local, national, and global stage.” Learn more about how EHS is guided by [XQ Learner Goals](#) in their [Portrait of a Graduate](#).

Student Data

Elizabethton serves 842 students in grades 9-12 this school year.

86%	White	30%	Free/Reduced Price Lunch
5%	Other	14%	Special Education
4%	Latinix		
4%	Black		
1%	Asian		

Blogs and Media

- [Celebrating women’s equality from the computer lab XQ Blog](#)
- [The most rewarding thing I’ve ever done XQ Blog](#)
- [How Bartleby changed the way I see my own education XQ Blog](#)
- [Real transformation begins at the ground level XQ Blog](#)
- [How making a podcast enriched students’ lives NPR](#)
- [Elizabethton High School providing students with a glimpse of the future WJHL](#)

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