

A black and white photograph of a young Black female student wearing a large headset, looking intently at a laptop screen. The image is partially obscured by colorful abstract shapes and white line-art icons.

2020 CHAMBER EDUCATION REPORT





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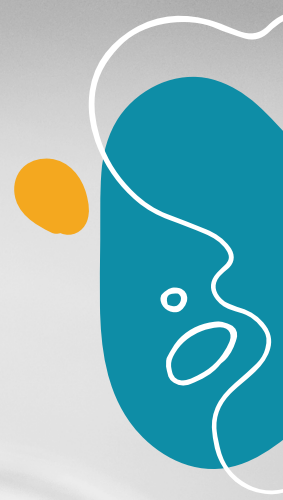
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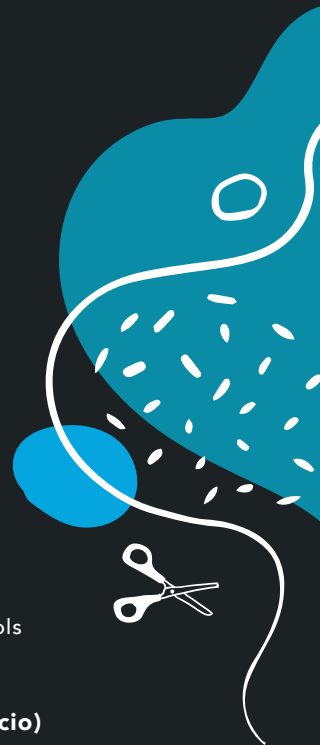
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


The special topic for the 2020 Chamber Education Report could not have been anything other than “The Challenges and Opportunities presented by COVID-19.” The report outlines the collective effort by countless stakeholders in Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) to not only find new ways to educate students but to also ensure families were fed, had access to devices and internet service, and were provided vital information about available community support and resources. It also points to the gaps in meeting all student needs. Over the past few months, the Education Report committee has seen and heard how much our community depends upon the school system to provide critical support and outreach to our most vulnerable families. It is clearer now than it has ever been that MNPS cannot do this alone - nor should it.

It feels overly simplistic to say that 2020 was a challenging year for the Nashville community. Between the March tornado, a global pandemic and intensified national and local dialogues on racial inequity, Nashville experienced a year unlike any other. Even while we continue to navigate the impact of COVID-19, the start of a new year provides the opportunity for reflecting on lessons learned, reevaluating our priorities and renewing our commitments to the things that matter most for our community.

Pre-pandemic, a little over 12 percent of Nashvillians fell below the poverty line, according to 2019 Census numbers. Families struggled to keep themselves fed and housed then and now. With high levels of unemployment and many of our region’s largest industries struggling to hold on, they are fighting even harder to stay afloat. Non-profit organizations, school personnel and other support systems have continuously reiterated that the pandemic served to magnify longstanding inequities already existent within our community. This past year has certainly been stressful for the majority of Nashvillians, but how a person has experienced (and continues to experience) the past year depends greatly on where they began before its onset.

While some people had the option of working remotely during the worst periods of the pandemic, essential workers –bus drivers, healthcare workers, those in the food industry – were on the frontlines, keeping our community and local economy going. People of color are disproportionately represented among essential workers and more likely to be uninsured. Local and national data confirms that some groups have been harder hit than others. The Center for Disease Control finds that Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in the number of COVID-related deaths and Metro Public Health data estimates that Hispanics account for nearly one in three confirmed COVID-19 cases. With both groups together representing 70 percent of MNPS students, it is not a leap to say our public school families have likely been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The early impact of COVID-19 on the school system is becoming apparent. As the number of COVID-19 cases in Nashville have ebbed and flowed, MNPS leadership has had to make difficult decisions about whether and when students go back into the physical classroom. Most students have been out of the school building since



March. While some are thriving in the virtual environment, remote learning is not an ideal learning setting for all children and is expected to be especially detrimental for English Learners, students with exceptional needs and those who are economically disadvantaged. Enrollment at MNPS has decreased as some parents made the decision to put their children into private schools (most of which have reopened) or delay the start of school for Pre-K or Kindergarten-aged students. Indeed, the consequences of this time will extend beyond pandemic and we are likely to see them manifest in unforeseeable ways for years to come.

Themes from the last several years of Education Reports echo throughout this report. The 2018 report, with a focus on “Social and Emotional Learning” highlighted the work of the district to meet the whole child needs of all students, many of whom were coming to school with varying degrees of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that brought about community-wide challenges. In 2019, we called attention to the role that the “Whole City” should play in ensuring that MNPS has the support and resources it needs to help students reach their full potential. While few could have predicted the events of 2020, many of the concerns expressed in the Education Report over the past several years were further exacerbated by the unforeseen impact of the pandemic. Students and families were struggling before the onset of COVID-19 and will continue to struggle if Nashville does not put its stake in the ground and declare a stronger commitment to public education.

As part of this effort, the Chamber and the committee made the decision to change the name of this report moving forward – from an “Education Report Card” to an “Education Report.” This is a concerted move away from the perception of judgement upon the school system – there are other, more systematic mechanisms for accountability – and towards a focus on providing a community perspective on public education that also owns its responsibility for Metro Schools. Our committee is made up of business leaders, entrepreneurs, elected officials, non-profit professionals and education experts. They understand that the barriers that many MNPS students face – food insecurity, housing instability, poverty, lack of access to healthcare – are community issues that schools often navigate without the benefit of additional resources and where there is an increasingly apparent need for a coordinated, systemic citywide effort. We have long leaned on the school district and non-profits to respond to these critical issues without addressing the root causes and the misaligned systems that keep them in place.

This year’s report outlines some of the biggest challenges emerging from COVID-19 – digital access, learning loss, inequity across student groups – but also looks to the future. This report also focuses on the possibilities and opportunities available to change what and how we have always done to better meet the needs of all students. The committee heard from stakeholders about the barriers that keep the district from achieving its goals, but also about the policies, procedures and mindsets that shifted in response to the pandemic – positive changes that should be sustained long-term to offer students the more personalized and responsive educational experience they require and deserve. To this end, our recommendations fall within three broad categories: how we recover, what we keep and how we move forward so that we do not go back to business as usual.

We urge the city's leadership to help us come together to evaluate what we have learned thus far and to reimagine what is possible when the whole city truly comes together for our students. Strong city and community leadership will be required to keep us from reverting to the status quo. In 2019, the committee recommended that the Mayor's Office bring together stakeholders to outline a new vision for public education in Nashville. This recommendation is included again in 2020. The events of the past year put a spotlight on longtime citywide issues which have ignited the community with a renewed sense of urgency to tackle the systemic and structural barriers that keep many students from the education they deserve.

We can only emerge from this pandemic stronger and more resilient if we pledge our commitment to providing for students and families in our public school system. The pandemic is not over, students are still not back in the classroom and we will not have a full picture of the challenges and opportunities brought about by COVID-19 on our students, families, communities and across the country for quite a while. The challenges outlined in this report have had a real human impact on our students and must be addressed. We ask that Nashville's leadership and the broader community act urgently to advocate for the needs of Metro Schools. We must do this together.



THE EDUCATION REPORT

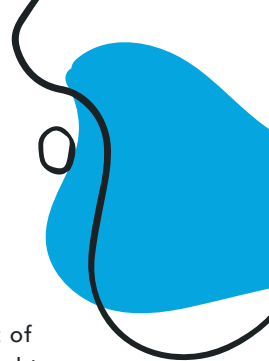
2020 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chamber Education Report committee encourages Metro Schools, the MNPS School Board, Mayor's Office and the Nashville community to strongly consider the following recommendations described in greater detail in the upcoming sections. The committee believes that each recommendation will help advance district and community goals.

- 1. Metro Council should work with MNPS to create a targeted special committee focused on funding and incorporating the best SEL practices for when it is safe to return all students to the school building.**
- 2. The Mayor's Office, Metro Council, MNPS and community partners should develop a plan for allocating dedicated resources to the district for the purposes of using schools as community hubs.**
- 3. MNPS should add "Technology" as a core value and internally develop a working definition that outlines the vision for how technology should be incorporated moving forward.**
- 4. MNPS should use learnings from the pandemic to identify strategies for leveraging technology to increase access for all families and produce a report outlining these opportunities.**
- 5. MNPS should provide the community with an aspirational funding amount that reflects what a high-quality education costs in order to guide budgetary conversations and encourage more private-public partnerships.**
Also a recommendation from 2019.
- 6. The Mayor's Office should convene MNPS, Metro departments, the nonprofit sector, business leaders and community stakeholders to craft a 2030 vision and aligned plan for a whole city approach to public education that is informed by an assessment of the needs of the school system and outlines cross-sector collaboration in addressing the gaps in support.** Also a recommendation from 2019.

THE EDUCATION REPORT

2020 COMMENDATIONS



Recognizing Student, Parent and Teacher Responsiveness

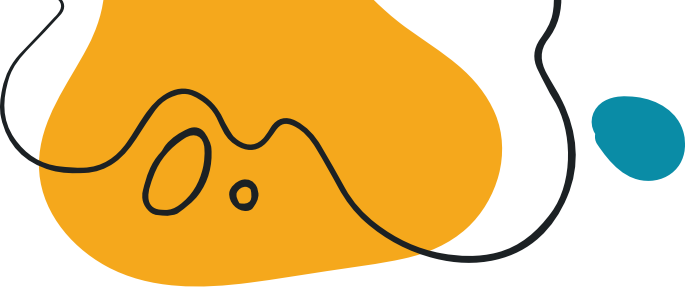
Parents, teachers and, most importantly, students quickly pivoted at the onset of the pandemic. Students had to adapt to a new virtual learning environment and to Schoology, MNPS's learning management platform, all while being away from their teachers, peers and school support systems. Parents were also forced to find a new rhythm, balancing their work and personal obligations with assisting their children in navigating remote learning. Teachers, many of whom are also parents with students at home have had to rapidly learn to deliver instruction in a remote environment and acquire the tools and skillsets to sustain learning and student engagement in this space. In addition to making the transition to teaching in a virtual setting, teachers across the district worked to check in on their students' overall well-being asking about their immediate needs and helping to connect them to resources. The committee celebrates the hard work of students in the face of frustrating circumstances and applauds parents and teachers for doing their best to ensure students remained engaged over the past nine months.

New Director of Schools Takes Quick Action

Then-interim Dr. Adrienne Battle was in the final stage of interviews for the MNPS Director of Schools position when a tornado hit Nashville in early March. In her capacity as interim, Dr. Battle jumped into action and provided strong and decisive leadership for supporting schools and families who were especially hard hit. Soon after, the Board of Education decided to halt the Director search and offered Dr. Battle the permanent role. In her new capacity, she served as the co-chair of a taskforce assigned to develop Nashville's plan for reopening schools alongside Dr. Alex Jahangir, chair of the city's COVID-19 task force. Over the last year, Dr. Battle and her leadership team have made critical and difficult decisions around when and whether to open schools. These decisions have sometimes received praise and other times have frustrated some parent and teacher groups. The committee recognizes the enormity of the job and applauds Dr. Battle for her careful leadership in navigating the school system through its most challenging time in recent history.

School and City Leaders Begin to Bridge the Device Divide

Technology was the most prominent challenge for school districts across the country, second only to ensuring students had access to food. The technological divide across Metro Schools was not a new phenomenon but was amplified when schools were completely closed and virtual learning became the only option for students. To remain engaged in their learning, students required quick access to devices like laptops or tablets. The district worked to deploy laptops from its available stock to those students who needed them most but did not have the reserve to meet the need for all 86,000 students. The committee commends city and district leadership for leveraging \$24 million in CARES Act funding to provide MNPS with the financial resource to move toward a 1:1 student to device ratio and for providing hotspots to families without Internet access. To date, not all students have received a new laptop or tablet, but the district is on its way toward getting a device into the hands of every Metro student.

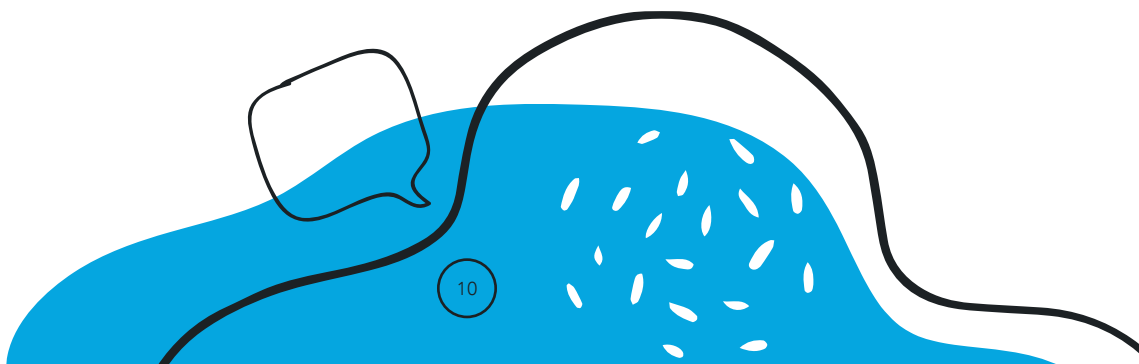


Strengthening the Relationships Between MNPS and Nashville State

Just a few weeks before the onset of the pandemic, Dr. Battle and Dr. Shanna Jackson of Nashville State Community College (NSCC) held a joint press conference to announce a new initiative called Better Together. Standing side by side, the two leaders pledged to work in tandem to support the transition of MNPS graduates into postsecondary through a data sharing agreement, more dual enrollment opportunities for MNPS students and summer programming to limit summer melt. In addition, JP Morgan Chase named Nashville as one of six U.S. sites for their New Skills Ready grant and committed \$7 million dollars over the next five years to helping MNPS, Nashville State and other partners design, build and transform career pathways for students. This was in part because of the existing collaboration between the two institutions. While COVID-19 derailed postsecondary plans for many students and NSCC enrollment for first-time students is down significantly, Dr. Battle and Dr. Jackson continue to strengthen their communication and coordination and are poised to become a statewide model for district and postsecondary partnership.

Podcast Focuses on Racial Equity in Metro Schools

Early in fall 2020, WPLN released a podcast called The Promise that garnered a great deal of attention among community members and education advocates. This work was a frequent topic of conversation among committee members and in education spaces. Producer Meribah Knight presented a history of how and why dismantling school segregation remains a challenge for Nashville and focused on two schools within a mile of each other in East Nashville. She made clear how efforts to desegregate schools cannot simply be owned by district or school leadership but must become an endeavor taken on by the community at large. The committee wishes to recognize and applaud Knight for putting a timely spotlight on this longtime challenge in public education and for inspiring a new understanding and sense of urgency around racial equity in Nashville's school system.



THE EDUCATION REPORT 2020 CONCERNS

Recovery Plan Needed for Anticipated Student Learning Loss

With anticipated learning losses as a result of “COVID slide,” school districts across the country will be challenged by the lack of data to track and monitor student progress. Here in Tennessee, state legislators made the call to suspend TNReady, the state’s standardized assessment, as school systems shut down in the middle of the public health emergency. While this was the right call to lift an additional burden off the shoulders of teachers and administrators, the state and local districts are left with little information about the immediate and potential long-term impact of the pandemic on student learning. Metro Schools administered the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment to students in grades K-9 in the fall, hoping to capture a baseline for the 2020-2021 school year. With the test administered virtually, the district is erring on the side of caution when interpreting the results and has suggested some score inflation at lower grade levels. The Department of Research, Assessment and Evaluation is encouraging teachers and school leaders to utilize other formative assessments to gauge student progress and to provide interventions when needed. It may be a long time before we fully understand the impact of COVID-19 on student learning since comprehensive data is limited at this point. It is important to begin to develop a recovery plan now, especially for our most vulnerable student populations who are predicted to suffer the greatest losses.

Aspirational Funding Still Unavailable to Metro Schools

The 2019 Education Report Card committee recommended that MNPS provide the community with an aspirational funding amount that reflects the cost of a high-quality education. This came after months of hearing from different stakeholders about the importance of fully funding MNPS without a clear explanation of what that meant. In February, Dr. Battle presented the board and community members with a different kind of proposal outlining a “maintenance of effort” budget with the absolute non-negotiables (e.g., teacher salaries, funds going to charter schools, etc.), alongside “aspirational” staff and resources that would help better support the district in its goals. Shortly after these budget meetings, the pandemic forced the city into difficult conversations around spending and the school system was asked to cut \$100 million from its budget.

School and city leaders spoke to the committee about the negative impact of a potential repeal to the planned property tax increase (later denied by a Davidson County judge) on school funding. Committee members remain concerned that the general public and voter base does not fully understand how MNPS uses limited funds to both educate students and provide a wide variety of supports to families. While private school tuitions can be upwards of \$20,000 annually, MNPS calculates its per pupil expenditure at about half that amount. In the midst of a pandemic, the investment into MNPS needs to be greater, not less.

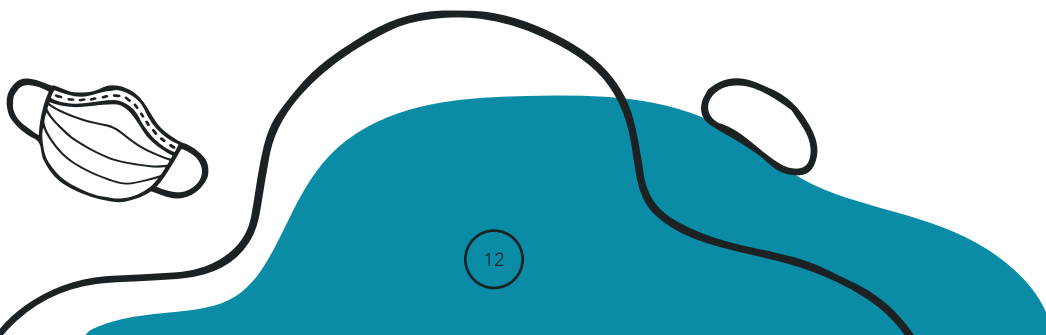


Digital Divide Contributes to Growing Inequity

While the committee commends the investment on the part of MNPS and the Mayor's Office to put \$24 million towards devices and hotspots for students, it is evident that significant inequities remain across student groups. Not everyone has made the smooth transition to virtual learning even with the widespread distribution of laptops and tablets. While some families have been able to lean on their neighbors and friends to navigate remote learning (e.g., through the formation of learning pods), many MNPS families continue to face severe challenges to participation. English Learners and students with exceptional needs have faced a variety of obstacles to logging into Schoology. In other families, parents make difficult decisions about whether to prioritize student learning or their own work obligations. It is critical to remember that device and hotspot distribution were only part of the problem – the digital divide and lack of equitable access to remote learning runs even deeper. Moving forward, it is important for the community and MNPS to consider larger issues tied to the digital divide, including widespread financial barriers to accessing broadband, the lack of available broadband in rural areas, a gap in digital literacy, the consideration of special accommodations needed for some student populations, and the cost to maintain the 1:1 student to device ratio long-term for a district that is already under-resourced.

More Resources Required to Address Student SEL Needs

With the hope that all students will return to in-person instruction sometime this school year, students will need increased resources and supports to help ease the transition back into the building. Many students have experienced considerable trauma during this time, whether related to being out of school for a long period of time or to challenges at home brought on by potential unemployment, health issues or food insecurity. The school system does not have the financial resources to meet the demand for Social Emotional Learning (SEL), mental and physical health supports. There remains a shortage of staff who provide these critical services but the current Tennessee Basic Education Program (BEP) formula funds districts for these positions at a student-to-staff ratio much lower than recommended by national experts. To its credit, MNPS has been intentional about addressing the SEL needs of students, even in a virtual environment. For the first month of the school year, the district emphasized that building relationships and making sure students were ok were top priorities. MNPS also launched the Navigator program, a coordinated, system-wide strategy for checking in with students to ensure they are connected to resources they may need. While these are certainly initiatives to be applauded, they do not take the place of the professionals in the building helping to address student trauma.





THE EDUCATION REPORT

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

PRESENTED BY **COVID-19**

The onset of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in March 2020 sent the Nashville community into a flurry of activity to respond to the most immediate needs of individuals and families most deeply impacted by the pandemic. Business as usual ceased to exist. Organizations were forced to find new ways to deliver services and information in a new and confusing context. Among them, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) moved quickly to reach its 86,000 students, recognizing that, for many, the school system was their lifeline to food, shelter and other critical resources.

This report both chronicles the events of the past year and identifies many of the lessons learned thus far. The detailed timeline that follows shows how the district adopted new strategies in response to emerging information on the pandemic and the community's fluctuating COVID-19 numbers. Next, the report outlines preliminary learnings based on the Chamber Education Report committee's discussions with stakeholders, virtual school visits and analysis of data and reports. The recommendations for 2020 fall into three general categories: how we recover, what we keep, and how we move forward.



TIMELINE

SPRING 2020

In the early morning of March 3, 2020, the Nashville region was hit by a tornado that ravaged the North Nashville, East Nashville, Germantown, Hermitage, and Donelson neighborhoods, as well as caused immense devastation to Putnam County to the east. With at least three buildings significantly damaged and many without power, MNPS closed all schools and central office for the remainder of the week, a few days shy of the district's Spring Break. Before students were set to return to school a week later, it was announced that schools would be closed for the foreseeable future due to the rapid spread of a then-unfamiliar virus called COVID-19.

In the midst of this frantic period, Dr. Adrienne Battle was appointed as the MNPS Director of Schools. Battle had served nearly a year as the interim Director and was one of several finalists for the position. The Board of Education made the unanimous decision to end their Director search and hire Battle, pointing to the need for her calm and consistent leadership as the district recovered from the tornado and with a looming pandemic. Without time to pause or celebrate, Dr. Battle and her team identified their most immediate priority – ensure the basic needs of students and families were met.

The primary source of breakfast and lunch for many Nashville children, MNPS moved quickly to check in with students and families and ensure that those who needed it had access to food. With the support of Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee and through the efforts of Community Achieves, the district's community schools model, several schools across the city became food distribution centers available to anyone under the age of 18, regardless of whether or not they were enrolled. The district also leveraged school bus routes as mobile food distribution sites, going directly into neighborhoods to find students. Many of these efforts to distribute food have continued into the fall, through partnerships between schools and community organizations. Recognizing the broader extent of the need, the Mayor's Office convened a Food Security Working Group that included Metro Schools to create a more coordinated effort to reach a greater number of families.

Metro Schools later moved to make printed instructional material available to children, especially those who could not access the electronic versions made available on the district's website. The MNPS Department of Curriculum and Instruction developed weekly, grade-appropriate packets for students and deployed them to food distribution sites and school bus stops. Non-profits like PENCIL and Book'em collected donated learning materials, school supplies, and books from business partners, community organizations, and individual donors to supplement the instructional packets. Recognizing its ability to connect with families across the city, government agencies and non-profits also leaned on MNPS for help in distributing important information to those who most needed it.

School teams attempted to reach their students through regular phone calls to families, recorded videos, and other strategies to continue to engage students. Even with these coordinated efforts, learning for most students was significantly disrupted. At the onset of the pandemic, MNPS was not prepared to offer formal guidance to

schools for what remote learning should look like nor did the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) have ready and available resources for school districts. While the district could encourage students to continue their schoolwork online, requiring attendance or assigning grades while many students did not have access to the necessary technology would have been fundamentally inequitable.

Later in the spring, Metro Schools launched Remote Learning 2.0 --a structured plan for remote learning to guide the remainder of the school year. The plan provided more clarity around the expectations for students and school staff and a process for requesting laptops or acquiring printed materials. Schoology was selected as the online learning management platform. Though it was an existing tool for the district, the platform had been used primarily as a repository for documents and usage by teachers and staff was limited and inconsistent.

With schools likely closed until the remainder of the academic year, state legislators and policy makers had to make decisions about certain requirements for districts and students. In mid-March, Tennessee lawmakers unanimously approved a bill that canceled the 2020 administration of TNReady, Tennessee's standardized assessment, and allowed TDOE to issue district waivers for the required 180 days of classroom instruction. Commissioner of Education Penny Schwinn also petitioned for the U.S. Department of Education to remove federal accountability requirements for Tennessee. Weeks later, all 50 states had been granted waivers.

The state also had to reevaluate the requirements for graduating seniors. The Tennessee State Board of Education reviewed graduation requirements and approved several emergency provisions that held harmless the class of 2020, in light of continued school closures. Graduation requirements were lowered and final grades were frozen for seniors as of March 20. The state also waived the requirement that all seniors sit for the ACT or SAT in order to graduate.

Even with these interventions, the class of 2020 has seen the influence of the pandemic, especially for certain student groups. After a decade of increase, the state's graduation rate stayed largely stagnant, as did that of MNPS. Given the disruptions to student learning this year, these numbers might have been a reason to celebrate but disaggregated data shows that while the graduation rate of white students increased from 2019 to 2020, the percentage of Black and Hispanic students who graduated actually decreased. The same was true for English Learners. In Metro Schools, the graduation rate decreased slightly, by one percentage point, from 82.4 percent in 2019 to 82.3 percent in 2020. Similar to the state data, English Learners and Hispanic students saw drops in their graduation rates. However, Black students in Metro actually saw increases comparable to their white peers (see "School System Performance" section for full data table).

The state's average ACT score also stayed flat, dropping one tenth of a point from 20.0 in 2019 to 19.9 in 2020. MNPS's composite score stayed the same as the previous year -- 18.5 -- with slight decreases for Black, Hispanic, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities (see "School System Performance"). Multiple reports also estimate a significant drop in postsecondary enrollment in the class of 2020 across the country, notably at community colleges and especially for Black males. More graduates of MNPS go to Nashville State Community College than any other postsecondary institution but the college saw significant declines in Fall enrollment among first time students.





TIMELINE

SUMMER 2020

The start of summer provided the district the time to plan multiple contingency plans for the fall, albeit with the hope that public health metrics for the city would deem it safe for children to go back to school. Director of Schools Dr. Adrienne Battle, alongside Dr. Alex Jahangir, chair of Nashville's COVID-19 task force, steered a committee made up of healthcare professionals and representatives from different school systems. In June, the group released Nashville's Plan: Framework for a Safe, Efficient, and Equitable Return to School, meant to guide school and district leaders in navigating the return to school, based on the needs of their students. MNPS also created several internal working groups to plan and make critical decisions across a number of different areas, including curriculum and instruction, devices and materials, and professional development.

When schools closed in the spring, the digital divide became a glaring obstacle to continued student learning, not just locally but across the country. A survey from Metro Schools found that about a third of students did not have a computer at home and some estimates suggested that as much as 20 percent of students did not have home internet service. In June, the Mayor's Office announced that \$24 million dollars in CARES Act funding would be used to help the district move toward a 1:1 student-to-device ratio. Orders were placed to acquire enough laptops for every student and hotspots for those who needed them. The high demand for laptops across the country meant that the district would not receive all the devices it needed for every student before the start of school. In the meantime, schools would need to rely on their existing stock of computers and prioritize distribution based on need. Recent numbers shared by the district show that, to date, 52,919 laptops and 16,067 hotspots have already been provided to students who needed them. In addition, about 6,250 new professional grade laptops were provided to teachers and certificated staff.

To try to continue to engage students over the summer, MNPS piloted its first ever Virtual Summer Experience, a monthlong calendar of synchronous and asynchronous programming available to any student. Teachers, counselors and community partners led a range of programs focused on enrichment, health, literacy and STEAM. While just a small fraction of students (1,380) logged in to participate, teachers, counselors and community partners offered a combined 984 sessions to students and caregivers. Students also had access to 63 virtual field trips.



TIMELINE

FALL 2020

MNPS students started the 2020-2021 school year virtually on August 4. In contrast to Remote Learning 2.0, the plan for virtual learning in the fall came with more structure. The district decided to utilize the Florida Virtual School curriculum for all students to provide some consistency across the district. The curriculum comes with virtual lessons that can be carried into an in-person setting to minimize disruption when students returned to the classroom. Students would have synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous learning modules. Teachers and staff would have clearly defined roles, with the expectation of delivering timely feedback to their students. Attendance would also be required for students.


Metro Schools has been an outlier in the region. Most neighboring counties made the decision to return to in-person instruction or to delay their start date until they could come back in-person. The district has been measured in their opening of schools, pointing to the need to protect students, families and teachers. MNPS has also monitored the reports of COVID-19 outbreaks from other school districts, most of whom have had to quarantine clusters of students and teachers or close schools entirely because of staff shortages.

The district seemed to have a great deal of support for this decision at the start of the school year. A citywide survey conducted by the Nashville Public Education Foundation in August found a majority of public-school parents (64 percent) gave the school system's handling of COVID-19 a positive rating. Additionally, the survey revealed interesting racial differences when respondents were asked about their opinion on returning to school. Three-fourths (74 percent) of Black respondents thought virtual school should continue to keep students, teachers and families safe until there is a coronavirus vaccine, compared to 57 percent of white respondents. In contrast, 35 percent of white respondents felt that Nashville should work to get in-person school as soon as possible, compared to just 18 percent of Black respondents.

Even with this support, the district has seen the consequences of continuing virtual learning. Metro Schools enrollment decreased by about four percent, with many parents opting to send their children to private school (and private schools have seen a spike in enrollment) or to homeschool. Some families have made the decision to keep their would-be Pre-K and kindergarten students at home and delay their start for the next year. This decrease will have consequences for the district's budget next year at an estimated loss of \$11 million .

In early September, the district announced a phase-in plan to stagger the return to in-person schooling for all other students choosing to return, with students in Pre-K through 2nd grade returning first, right after Fall Break, followed in subsequent weeks by grades 3-8, and high school students returning in January. The Family Decision Survey was sent out to families to gauge the number of students who would return to school in person (when deemed safe to do so) or continue with remote learning. According to district data, more than half (56.5 percent) of respondents indicated that their student would be returning in person, with notable differences across student groups. While 63.5 percent of Hispanic/Latino and 61.6 percent of white students indicated they would return in person, just 47.7 percent of Black students said they would come back. Additionally, more than two-thirds of English Learners (67.3 percent) indicated their intent to come back in person.





Cohorts of students began their return to the school building starting in late September. Students with exceptional needs were the first to come back in person due to their need for support from paraprofessionals and access to other school-based services. Students in Pre-k-4 made their return, as scheduled, in person in October, but the spike in COVID-19 cases in Nashville and across Tennessee resulted in a delay for middle school. High school students were expected to return in January 2020, at the start of the spring semester.

The district's decision to push back the return of older students has been an increasingly contentious issue. Different stakeholder groups have expressed frustration at the district's decision to delay in-person instruction for all students. Rallies during school board meetings and online campaigns have called for the district to get students back to the classroom immediately. Some proponents of an immediate return to the classroom have cited the widening inequity between students who are economically disadvantaged and their wealthier peers. Others have pointed to emerging research that suggests that in-person schooling does not contribute to community spread of COVID-19. While there is a general consensus that the quicker children can return to the classroom the better, it is important to note that organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics underline that virtual learning may be the best option in communities where the spread of the virus has not been sufficiently contained.

Adding to the debate are the staffing challenges that have emerged during the pandemic. School districts across Middle Tennessee are struggling to find substitutes when teachers have to quarantine or self-isolate. Outside of MNPS, neighboring school districts have closed schools entirely or extended breaks largely because of the inability to staff classrooms. Teachers have also expressed concerns about the district's inability to ensure certain safety precautions. Six-foot social distancing would be complicated or impossible in some schools. Many buildings do not have good ventilation systems, and providing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) has been hard. A survey by the Metropolitan Nashville Educators Association (MNEA), the district's teachers' union, in September found that half of teachers who responded to the survey were not comfortable returning in person. The union has repeatedly asked that the district delay the return to in person until teachers feel confident in their safety. At a board meeting in early November, the MNEA president requested that all students return to virtual learning until the end of the Fall semester.

With COVID-19 numbers at their highest peak since the start of the pandemic, the district declared it unsafe for students and school staff who were in-person to continue. Right before Thanksgiving, MNPS announced a transition back to remote learning for all students, effective the Monday after the holiday. The district has developed a COVID-19 Risk Tracker that will inform the return to in-person instruction. If the risk score is above 7 (on a scale from 0-10), students will all remain virtual. A score below 7 will begin to transition students back into the classroom. As of the publication of this report, the risk score was at an 8.9.

In the sections that follow, the report outlines three areas of discussion – how we recover, what we keep, and how we move forward. The 2019 Education Report Card special topic of “Whole City” is a consistent thread throughout each section. Many of the best practices or notable highlights from this year could not have been possible without community support of Metro Schools. Likewise, the lingering challenges or gaps cannot be closed without a commitment from the Whole City to walk alongside MNPS to identify and dissolve the systemic barriers that keep some students from what they need to succeed.

HOW WE RECOVER

It will be some time before we know the full extent of the impact of the pandemic on our community and on MNPS, but there are early indicators of what might be required to continue to ensure the safety and well-being of students. In conversations with different stakeholders, three areas of focus emerged when discussing how we can begin to make up for the impact of this time away from the physical classroom: supporting the whole child; addressing the basic needs of families; and using an equity lens for learning loss. This section expands upon these themes and introduces some lessons learned about what is needed to aid students, families and schools in recovery.

Doubling Down on Social and Emotional Learning

At the start of the school year, the district identified the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) needs of students as a top priority. SEL is defined by the district as “a process through which adults and children learn to recognize and manage emotions, demonstrate care and concern for others, develop positive relationships, make good decisions and behave ethically, respectfully and responsibly.” Recognizing the emotional toll the pandemic was taking on the entire district, MNPS leadership urged teachers and school administrators to spend the first few weeks of the fall semester connecting with students and helping them adjust to a virtual learning environment.

When all students eventually return to in-person instruction, they will have spent considerable time outside of the classroom and away from their school-based support systems. Many may have experienced considerable trauma and the pandemic itself may translate into an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), especially if the family suffered through a traumatic event such as unemployment or the loss of a loved one. Additional resources will be needed to increase student access to professionals like social workers, school counselors and restorative practice specialists who can provide critical services for a recovering and readjusting student body. Students are already asking for support. When meeting with the committee, several students shared that they and their peers would benefit from regular mental and emotional check-ins. They understood the need to keep schools closed but described feeling alone and isolated from their friends and school communities. These feelings are likely to increase the more time students spend outside of the school building. The district has begun to systematize these types of check-ins through the Navigator program (described in greater detail in the next section).



Students are asking for the immediate support of their teachers and support staff, but it is also important to start thinking about the resources and people needed to care for them upon their return to in-person instruction. Nashville's plan for reopening schools offers some operational guidance for getting students back into the school building but does not include what is needed to ensure their social, emotional and mental well-being. Rather than create an additional report, the committee recommends that **Metro Council should work with MNPS to create a targeted special committee focused on funding and incorporating the best SEL practices for when it is safe to return all students to the school building.** This committee should prioritize restorative practices, address trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and ensure that entire school staffs are equipped with the tools and training to provide students support upon their return. Student safety and well-being are of overlapping concern for MNPS and Metro Government. Departments such as Metro Nashville Public Health, Metro Nashville Police Department, and Juvenile Justice must be engaged in the conversation and asked to think carefully about the resources needed and available for students as they return to in-person instruction.

There is a precedent for this. Last year, Vice Mayor Jim Schulman created eight special committees, two of which were focused on targeted areas of concern in public education – one focused on teacher spending on school supplies and the other on afterschool opportunities for young people. The committees were made up of council members and community members who delivered reports of their findings and some key recommendations for Metro Government. While progress on these recommendations was likely stalled due to COVID-19, the idea to invite council members to deeply study pressing issues in Nashville and identify solutions was a good one.

The importance of SEL cannot be overstated. Over the past several years, the district has made a much more concerted effort to ensure that every school is adopting core SEL principals. The work of the MNPS SEL team has been nationally recognized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and by other communities across the country. However, the department has always operated with a minimal budget, with much of the funding coming from external grants. As the district could look to face extensive budget cuts because of the pandemic, the committee worries that some of the resources schools need to address SEL, especially social workers, counselors and nurses, may be at risk at a time when they are so greatly needed. SEL was the special topic of the 2018 Education Report Card and over the past several years has become a critical lens through which the committee has come to understand that some of the greatest challenges for Metro Schools are a result of community-wide issues that make their way into the school building. For this reason, Metro Council and other Metro departments are necessary partners in helping MNPS plan for the safe return of all students.





Continuing to Provide for Basic Needs

Aside from academic instruction, schools provide innumerable and often unrecognized services to serve and care for students and families. Leading a great deal of this work is Community Achieves, an MNPS initiative linking schools to community resources. The work falls under four pillars: College and Career Readiness, Parent/Family Engagement, Health and Wellness, and Social Services. Community Achieves, along with other “community school” models like school-based Family Resource Centers (managed by PENCIL) and Communities in Schools Tennessee, serve the wide range of needs of families in their schools, including food pantries, individual case management and social service referrals.

The Community Achieves model calls for deep engagement with school populations to understand what needs arise for families and to lean on the external community – government agencies, faith organizations, non-profits and businesses – to help provide resources. At the onset of the pandemic, district staff and site coordinators made food distribution the highest priority. They worked creatively to ensure families had access to meals and food boxes, utilizing the kitchens of high schools with culinary programs and partnering with companies to make individual home deliveries for those who needed them. Aside from food, Community Achieves also provided diapers and other highly sought-after resources to their school communities.

As students and families continue to need support, there are lessons to be learned from the quick response of Community Achieves throughout the pandemic and how schools have been leveraged to meet community members where they are. **The Mayor’s Office, Metro Council, MNPS and community partners should develop a plan for allocating dedicated resources to the district for the purposes of using schools as community hubs.** Over the past several years, the Community Achieves model has slowly expanded into more schools and has strengthened its collaboration with Family Resource Centers and Communities in Schools to serve more families across the district. Finding the resource to do this has been a challenge. While the MNPS demographic is rapidly changing and needs appear to be increasing, initiatives like Community Achieves forge connections between community resources and the people who need them. In this way, schools already serve as de facto community centers, increasing access to information, people and support. As Nashville works toward recovery, the Whole City needs to consider a coordinated strategy for deploying high-demand resources into the communities that most need them. Leaning on the relationships that schools and staff already have with families is a good place to start.

Because relationships have been so vital to reaching families during school closures, the district has also introduced a new program to build stronger connections between students and school staff. The Navigator program is a systemwide effort to identify and support the needs of every student. It enlists teachers, staff and administrators to check in with a small cohort of students on a regular basis to more comprehensively and consistently reach students whether they are in-person or learning remotely. Navigators connect students and families with district and community supports and resources as needed, including housing, food and mental health services. There are an estimated 4,570 Navigators in the



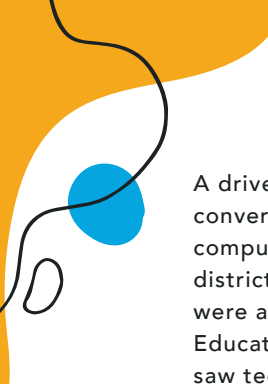
district. To date, the district has reported at least 163,000 Navigator check-ins and 1,300 collaborative referrals. The district has also created a data dashboard to track these interactions and the support students and families are requesting. At least 45,700 students have been in contact with a Navigator. District leadership has indicated that it intends to keep the Navigator system going even with a complete return to in-person instruction.

For many in the Nashville community, recovery will be a slow process. Schools have become epicenters for bridging available community resources with the people who can be best served by them. Community Achieves and the Navigator programs are both examples of how the district continually provides for students and their families. Unfortunately, as the committee heard repeatedly, school systems are only evaluated on performance outcomes, not on the critical services they deliver to their most vulnerable families.

An Equity Lens for Learning Loss

In a district like MNPS, where an estimated 75 percent of students are living in some form of poverty, academics took a temporary, but necessary, backseat to student well-being at the start of the pandemic. Once they figured out how to deploy meals, district leaders turned their attention to how to educate students in a completely new environment. The longer students were out of the classroom, the greater the concern around potential academic losses during the pandemic (known colloquially as “COVID slide”). MNPS and school districts across the U.S. are working to gather and analyze data that may provide some insight into the extent of the losses, but this information can be limited, given that instruction is being delivered in a variety of ways to different students and state-level assessments were canceled in the spring. However, prior research on the impact of being out of school suggests that, compounded by the digital divide, this time away from school is more likely to affect English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities and those who are economically disadvantaged.

While data about COVID slide is emerging, local and national research can provide high-level projections and estimations of what this learning loss might look like based on previous work on the impact of out of school time. A research brief from the Northwest Evaluation Association (highlighted by the Brookings Institute) used the prior Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores from five million students to make “informed projections” about the long-term impact of out of school time. Their analysis estimated that students were likely to have started Fall 2020 with 70 percent of the gains from the previous year in reading and just 50 percent of the gains from the previous year in mathematics. In other words, the disruption to the school year in the spring is likely to have prevented students from making the total amount of growth they would have made in a typical year. Coupled with the summer months with no formal instruction, many students are probably returning to school (virtually or in-person) further behind than in years past. A Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) analysis using fall district assessments shows similar trends. The department projects significant losses in reading (50 percent decrease in proficiency) and math (65 percent decrease in proficiency).



A driver of these anticipated losses, the digital divide became a prominent conversation following school closures in the spring. While students who had computers and internet at home were able to access material posted online by the district and engage with their teachers virtually, students without these resources were at a disadvantage. A survey administered to teachers from the Tennessee Education Research Alliance and TDOE found that three-quarters of respondents saw technology as the biggest need for being able to teach during the pandemic. Parent groups also expressed concern that not all students (and especially low-income students) have equitable access to online learning. A policy brief released by the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) includes various data points highlighting how low-income people and people of color are less likely to have internet service and devices because of cost and geographical barriers.

While the pandemic and the exacerbated digital divide have created a host of academic obstacles for many students and families across the district, English Learners (ELs) and those with exceptional needs experience unique barriers. In Metro Schools, an existing shortage of parent outreach translators made communication with ELs difficult. A lag in translation meant that non-English speaking families were getting information about virtual learning or available devices well after their peers. Indeed, for the first few weeks of virtual learning, fewer ELs were logging into Schoology than their non-EL peers and many did not know they could get a laptop or tablet from the district. For many students with disabilities, virtual learning was simply inaccessible. Social distancing was not possible for students who relied upon paraprofessionals for their mobility or who needed to be guided (in person) through their schoolwork. For those not requiring one-on-one support, the virtual platform could be too difficult to navigate or uncondusive to their style of learning.

To their credit, the MNPS Offices of Exceptional Education and English Learners were quick to ring the alarm when they saw that many of these students were being left behind during the transition to virtual learning and adopted strategies for additional support. Students with the most extreme needs were the first allowed to go back to the school building; however, because many of these students are medically fragile, this was not an option that all families found safe. Outdoor technology hubs were also established in six schools across the city and interpreters are on standby in those communities with the largest concentrations of non-English speaking families. Community partners have also played a big role in engaging students and communicating with families that might otherwise be hard to reach. Some have even set up remote learning sites so students can engage in distance learning in a safe location with access to the internet.

With uncertainty around the timing of a full, in-person return to school for students across the state, some are already calling for assessments to be put on hold while districts focus on other priorities and work to recover the ground lost during this time. At an August meeting, the MNPS school board voted 7-2 on a resolution calling for a stop to TNReady this year. Williamson County Schools and Shelby County Schools have also called for a waiver on state testing.





However, other advocates argue that some assessment is essential to identifying the necessary interventions to support students, whether they are in person or remote. They also make the distinction between assessment and accountability, arguing that educators will need assessment data to inform instruction and to better understand where students might need to make greater gains. While under a federal mandate to continue to administer the state assessment, Governor Bill Lee and Commissioner of Education Penny Schwinn have asked for a loosening of accountability so that districts, schools and teachers will be held harmless for the year.

Regardless of the mechanism, some measure of assessment can help inform a baseline for where students are and help teachers and districts design interventions to scaffold learning for those who have fallen most behind. Civil rights organizations have long argued for the need to look at data, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and group status, to ensure all students receive an equitable education. The committee encourages the district to maintain its commitment to closing equity gaps and seek out the resources, interventions and partnerships necessary to address the long-term impacts of COVID slide.

WHAT WE KEEP

COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated challenges for Metro Schools, but there are bright spots to be acknowledged and recognized. The pandemic has forced teachers, administrators, community organizations, parents and students to be innovative in thinking about what education looks like in a virtual context. Nearly every expert who met with the committee was asked the same question: what changes that you have seen in response to the pandemic do you want to keep moving forward? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common response was around technology. While there is no discounting the barriers present for many students and community members, new uses of technology have the potential to enhance the learning experience.

Leveraging Technology

Remote learning has accelerated an existing trend of technological integration in schools. While the transition to remote learning has been challenging and overwhelming at times, stakeholders discussed the potential benefits of technology for both students and MNPS staff members. The adaptation to technology has started to better prepare students for the digital workforce they will be entering when they leave MNPS. Workforce and education researchers have recognized Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation will change the jobs of the future and the skillsets students need to develop now to acquire those jobs.

Further, technology has provided additional opportunities for personalized learning. On average, each student has about 10 hours of synchronous learning each week and engages with their teacher or teachers three times a week. Students spend the rest of the time learning asynchronously. For many students, the flexibility to move at their own pace and create their own schedule is appealing and, in some circumstances, necessary to keeping them in school. For students who need to take care of a family member or who need to work to contribute to their household, having the option of doing schoolwork when it

is convenient for them removes the burden of competing priorities. Students also shared that they enjoyed having one-on-one time with teachers during virtual office hours because it gave them an additional opportunity to seek out help. Technology can certainly help to further personalize learning, tailored to the diverse needs and experiences of every student.

Additionally, community and business partners have leaned on technology and remote platforms to continue giving students access to critical experiences and support. For example, the Academies of Nashville held its first virtual Career Exploration Fair for 9th graders in November with nearly 200 business partners creating short videos describing their jobs. Business partners also work with schools to provide virtual field trips and job shadows to students, experiences they would have had in person in a traditional year. After-school and college access programs have also continued their outreach to students, recognizing the higher risk for disengagement and greater need for support systems during this pandemic year.

Metro Schools had an existing model for personalized virtual learning prior to the pandemic. The MNPS Virtual School delivers an online education to roughly 350 students and has created its own systems and procedures to enable students to learn at their own pace, on their own schedule. Along with the Florida Virtual School curriculum, the school also develops its own instructional material (thanks to two designated staff people) that provides a higher level of engagement for students. While there were some barriers to entry for students who might have considered the Virtual School previously, including GPA requirements and needing to have access to a device, the distribution of devices to every student in the district may make this a more viable option for students who find they excel in an all-virtual learning environment.

It is also important to consider how technology is leveraged not only by students, but by school and district staff. The committee heard from principals that being able to participate in virtual meetings for the district (and eliminating the travel time) allowed them more time to be present for school staff and students. Teachers also had access to online training and professional development opportunities that helped prepare them for the transition to remote teaching. The committee saw firsthand how teachers brought enthusiasm and creativity to their lessons, challenged to think of innovative ways to reach and engage children with new tools.

Considering both the ways in which technology has shown to be an asset during this time and the skillsets that will be required in the future workforce, the committee recommends that **MNPS add “Technology” as a core value and internally develop a working definition that outlines the vision for how technology should be incorporated moving forward.** MNPS core values, as described on the website,

“...drive and focus our collective commitments included in our mission and vision. These values reflect the principles that guide our internal conduct, as well as our relationships with the external community. Our core values are woven throughout our goals, high-level strategies and performance measures.”

The district’s core values currently include:

Whole Learner	Relevance	Collaboration
Literacy	Innovation	Equity
Excellence	Talent	Diversity

The district already recognizes the increasing importance of technology across all tier levels. MNPS has a total of five STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) magnet elementary schools and has introduced a STEAM framework in nearly all middle schools. At the high school level, the Academies of Nashville identifies a ready MNPS graduate as a student who will have at least one course completed online for high school or college credit.

While it is certainly reflected in the district's strategic plan (and will be the core theme of its Learning Technology plan), the committee encourages both the Director of Schools and the Board of Education to adopt Technology as a core value to reinforce existing goals and initiatives, guide decisions around its usage and provide a framework for how it should be embedded throughout the school system. This framework should provide guidance for continued funding for maintenance, software and acquisition of new devices; new or enhanced partnerships with IT companies and organizations; capacity building of teachers and staff; budget allocation; and defined goals for usage and mastery.

The Commitment to Increasing Equity and Access for All Students and Families

Just as the accelerated integration of technology into public education may well produce some effective practices moving forward, it has also ignited conversations about lack of access for many students and families. Inequitable access to devices and connectivity was a major hurdle MNPS had to overcome and may well continue to be a challenge, given the need for maintenance and the ongoing support families will require to connect to the Internet. Acquiring devices and hotspots was one obstacle but digital literacy and technological acumen was another. Realizing that online tutorials and virtual channels of communication were not working for some families, the district created technology hubs at schools across the district to offer in-person tech support to those who needed it.

The virtual infrastructure created in response to the pandemic has provided new ways for families and students to engage with schools, often with fewer barriers such as transportation or childcare. The committee heard about families that now had the opportunity to meet with principals and teachers about their children through online platforms or attend parent meetings when this was not previously possible. Similarly, when students reflected on their learning during the pandemic, many appreciated the more direct access to their teachers through online office hours and the opportunity to work at their own pace.

School leaders spoke about the opportunities that students might have to take courses unavailable in their own schools because of the smaller student body or the lack of a qualified teacher in the building. This was echoed in comments by Dr. Battle and Dr. Shanna Jackson, president of Nashville State Community College, who shared their excitement that the technology and increasing comfort around it may motivate many more MNPS students to take college courses while still in high school.



In conversations with committee members, stakeholders pointed to the new opportunities that technology presented and the role that it should continue to play in student learning, even when most students return to in-person instruction. The move to a 1:1 student-to-device ratio means learning and student engagement can take place after school, on inclement weather days, in the event of emergency school closures and during school breaks. City and district leaders pointed to the opportunities that could be available to students when the challenge of transportation or the limitations of a small school were taken off the table. Students could access virtual clubs and programs, summer remediation gifted and advanced academics courses like Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs) currently not available at every school.

There is an opportunity to gain important insight about how the adoption of technology has served as an asset to different student groups and stakeholders. The committee recommends that **MNPS use learnings from the pandemic to identify strategies for leveraging technology to increase access for all families and produce a report outlining these opportunities.** Equity is a key principle for MNPS, and the district now has the infrastructure and expertise in both the Office of Equity and Inclusion and in Learning Technology to conduct a comprehensive study examining where the pockets of inequity have been, where they remain and what might be a long-term plan for continuing to incorporate technology into the classroom in an equitable way.

With a new Executive Officer of Equity and Inclusion for the school system, there is an opportunity to align strategies around technology with key equity priorities. This includes disrupting and eliminating systematic inequities, ensuring access and representation in academic programming and building staff capacity for equity-based teaching and learning. Moreover, the district is working on developing an equity lens that should be used by all MNPS departments to identify ways to ensure access to and opportunities for incorporating technology to eliminate inequities.

Along with the Offices of English Learners and Exceptional Education, community and business partners should be included in this project. Many non-profits adapted quickly to deliver traditional services in new ways and found that remote services were well received by people who had previously had barriers to access, like transportation. These insights could inform future opportunities for partnerships that help close equity gaps. Additionally, IT companies and internet providers should also help address the challenges that are likely to persist beyond the pandemic. While many of these partners lent their support to the district to get students and families connected to the Internet, the need will continue, and a longer-term strategy and commitment is necessary.

Moving forward, technology should be a core component of instruction rather than a band aid solution when other options are not available. Education advocates like The Education Trust write that the digital divide is not simply something to be thinking about when schools are virtual but even beyond, as technology becomes a more critical part of education. The pandemic has revealed where technology has helped fill the gaps and where it could be further leveraged to do things better and more efficiently. The committee celebrates the new ideas that have emerged under challenging circumstances but laments the inequities that were pervasive in the transition to remote learning – mainly along socioeconomic and racial lines and for certain student groups.





HOW WE MOVE FORWARD

In considering how the community takes the lessons learned from the pandemic and begins to pave a path forward, the committee made the decision to include two recommendations from last year to reiterate last year's focus on a Whole City commitment to education. At the core of the 2019 report was the emphasis on ensuring that MNPS has the community support and resource to meet the needs of all its students. It was clear to the committee that MNPS did not have the sustained structures and support systems to adequately provide for all students in a relatively normal year. In the midst of a pandemic, this is even more evident.

Reimagining the MNPS Budget

It cannot be overstated that a major lesson coming from the pandemic is how much the community relies upon its public schools for supports beyond the education of its children. Metro Schools operates on a normal year with a slim budget and many of its major initiatives (Pre-K, trauma-informed schools and magnet schools among them) are often funded through grants and philanthropic support.

Last year's committee recommended that **MNPS should provide the community with an aspirational funding amount that reflects what a high-quality education costs in order to guide budgetary conversations and encourage more private-public partnerships.** The district developed a new kind of budget presentation for 2020 – one that reflected both non-negotiables (or “maintenance of effort”) and explicitly outlined the staffing and resources that would allow them to do more. Unfortunately, they were forced to abandon their aspirational funding request. They were awarded \$914.9 million dollars in the Mayor's budget – a relatively flat amount over the previous year. Later, the economic impact of the pandemic on the city resulted in a request from the Mayor's Office that MNPS cut \$100 million from an already tight budget.

While the recommendation was implemented, the committee decided to include it for a second year in a row. MNPS leadership and the Board of Education should continue to present the Mayor's Office, Metro Council and the broader Nashville community with the aspirational budget that better reflects what they need to continue to educate and support students and families. The proposed 2021-2022 MNPS budget should not shy away from all the services the school district provides or will need to provide in the coming year to ensure student safety and well-being. The committee urges the district to continue to push for the funding amount it needs to equitably support all students, whether they are virtual, in-person, or some combination of the two. Remote learning incurs different costs that the district will need to plan for including the maintenance of a 1:1 student-to-device ratio, school supplies that were provided to students and the technological support that has been provided to teachers and families.





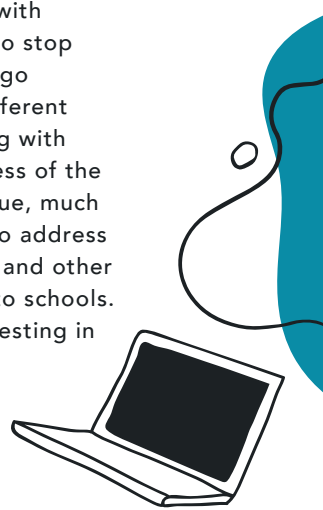
The district cannot be its only advocate. A collective community voice is needed to help Metro Schools secure the resources it needs. Last year's report included a corresponding community commitment to go alongside the recommendation that resonates even more deeply a year later – **as a whole city, we must determine what it means to sufficiently fund our public school and find a mechanism to get us there.** Advocacy can occur in a number of ways.


At the state level, advocacy may include asking legislators to hold school districts harmless when making budgetary decisions and taking an opportunity to reevaluate the Basic Education Program (BEP) formula, last updated in 2007. Since 1992, the BEP has determined how funds are generated for and distributed to school districts in Tennessee. It is the state's estimation of the cost of a basic level of education which fulfills the mandate of the General Assembly to "support a system of free public schools that provides, at least, the opportunity to acquire general knowledge, develop the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally prepare students intellectually for a mature life and a career path." Over the past several years, the BEP review committee has recommended an update to the formula to increase funding for technology and to adjust funding ratios for school counselors, nurses and social workers. In the current context, these adjustments are needed more than ever.

Locally, advocacy begins by understanding how our school system is funded and what the community's role is in helping to determine that amount. Currently, Metro Schools makes up about half of the city's overall budget, and an estimated 35% of Davidson County property taxes go to fund Metro Schools. The property tax rate was a major topic of conversation at the end of 2019 when the state comptroller publicly told Metro Council that it needed to do something immediately about its financial challenges.

In response, Mayor John Cooper proposed a sizeable property tax increase to generate new revenue. At the rate of \$3.155 per \$100 of assessed value, the property tax was at its lowest in the history of Metro Government. An independent study of Metro Finances released by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce determined that the city's tax and fee burden (including property tax, as well as other common taxes and fees) were found to be 16 to 53 percent less than all of the peer cities included in the study.

In June, Council members approved a 34 percent property tax increase, with slightly more dollars going to public education. Months later, a petition to stop the increase was submitted. A judge later ruled that the referendum not go before voters because the language was flawed and unconstitutional. Different stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential referendum, sharing with the committee that they believed there was a lack of community awareness of the dependency of the school system and other Metro services on city revenue, much of which comes from property taxes. Without the property tax increase to address the fund balance and set Metro on the path to financial stability, schools and other Metro resources would have had to make draconian cuts, including cuts to schools. As a community, it is important for us to recognize the importance of investing in our public school system.





As students transition back into a modified school environment, the economic impact of the pandemic means that all states and municipalities are likely to be considering cuts to education budgets as their own budgets experience shortfalls. The Mayor and Metro Council have the final responsibility of funding Metro departments and the school system, but the community benefits from a deep understanding of how we fund public education and what the benefits are to this investment. Next year's budget cycle is sure to be the most challenging one in recent history, but the city cannot lose sight of its obligation to educate its children and it should not forget how greatly it depends on Metro Schools to reach the most vulnerable members of our community. It is up to the community, as taxpayers, to advocate for a strong and well-resourced public education system.

Coordinated Leadership and Advocacy for Public Education

The pandemic has created wide-spread support for public education, shown us the benefits of technology and forced the community into a new sense of urgency. This combination makes this the right time to re-imagine how schools can truly be a positive hub for the community and leverage private and non-profit partnerships. What was missing for the committee in 2019 and continues to be missing in 2020 is strong leadership across the city to prioritize public education and ensure an alignment across stakeholders and support systems to best assist students and families.

The 2019 Education Report Card recommended that **the Mayor's Office should convene MNPS, Metro departments, the nonprofit sector, business leaders and community stakeholders to craft a 2030 vision and align a plan for a whole city approach to public education informed by an assessment of the needs of the school system and outlines cross-sector collaboration in addressing the gaps in support.** In many ways, the pandemic has brought on greater coordination across Metro departments and inspired new partnerships. This momentum needs to be maintained going forward through intentional and concerted efforts to create structures of support for Metro Schools. With a new Education Advisor in place for the Mayor's Office, the committee believes there is the potential for visioning at the city level to create a sustainable community vision that outlives any Mayor or Director of Schools.

While they may play a limited role in district operations, the Mayor sets the tone and vision for the community's support of public education. They can emphasize the importance of a high-quality education, utilize data to create structures and systems of support for the district and integrate various services to support areas such as physical and mental health needs. As head of Metro departments, the Mayor can ensure that government services (social services, juvenile court and public health) are aligned to best meet the needs of Metro Schools, especially if they recognize the impact of external factors on a student's ability to be academically successful. In addition, they have regional and state influence that may prompt action on certain challenges that extend beyond county lines. For example, the pandemic has elevated the conversation around Wi-Fi as a public good and not an advantage that some have over others. Providing this infrastructure for students and families should not be the responsibility of the school system, and support for this could be driven by the Mayor's Office.

Effective schools and districts do not simply appear – they are fostered by the community they serve. Because of their ability to bring people together and to set an agenda for the whole city, Mayors can activate a community into action. Last year’s corresponding community commitment stated that we must elect and hold accountable city and district leaders who make education the top priority. City leaders should provide the avenue for crafting a whole city vision that invites the community in as a partner in addressing the challenges and celebrating the success of Metro Schools.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The impact of this time away from school has been overwhelming for all stakeholders. Aside from the learning loss we are likely to see, many students have experienced what can only be described as a new form of trauma – removed from their peers and school communities and forced into a new method of instruction that may not be meeting their needs. Parents have certainly had to support their students’ at-home learning in ways that left many frazzled and frustrated. For those who could work from home, this gave new meaning to work-life-balance. For those who had to continue to work outside the home during the pandemic, this meant finding new childcare arrangements or hoping their student could manage online learning on their own. Teachers adopted new tools of the trade and made extra efforts to engage their students, often with their own children to support.

It is likely that schools will never entirely go back to what they used to be – and in many ways, that is a good thing. The committee heard from school and district level stakeholders that the pandemic brought about greater collaboration and stronger partnerships to meet some of the needs of students and families. Through the support of the Mayor’s Office and community partners, MNPS has made the leap to a 1:1 district, where every student can obtain a device and internet service. As the district has adapted to new technology and virtual learning, new ideas are emerging that could bring greater equity and opportunity to students and schools that might not otherwise have had access. These are just some of the silver linings.

While incredible feats were accomplished during this time, many challenges were also exacerbated. It is worth reiterating that many of the obstacles to student learning throughout the pandemic are deep-seeded community issues that were made more apparent by the forced transition to virtual learning. Many of these will outlast students’ return to the classroom unless systemic barriers are addressed. The digital divide in Nashville and across the state will continue until broadband access is made more readily available to everyone. Food insecurity is widespread across Davidson County, but the community relies on MNPS to do much of the heavy lifting to ensure students have breakfast, lunch and sometimes dinner. These early lessons from the pandemic should give us pause and provide the community with a sharper lens for self-reflection.

This year’s Education Report chronicles the events of the past year and highlights both the opportunities and challenges presented by COVID-19. The learnings in this report reflect what we heard from stakeholders about what it will take to recover, what we keep and how we move forward. MNPS, and every school district across the country, continues to navigate uncharted territory, attempting to make the best decisions they can for their students and families. For this, Metro Schools should certainly be applauded. However, the pandemic is not over and the work is far from done.

MNPS cannot do this alone. There is much the community can do today. The most surefire way to get students back into classrooms is to curb the community spread of COVID-19. The more we act in the best interest of our students and teachers, the greater the chance that we can begin to rebound from the events of the past year and come out stronger on the other end.

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Between March and early November, the department of Nutrition Services had distributed 2,507,005 meals to students. Additionally, Community Achieves has distributed more than 48,000 food boxes (the equivalent of 1,345,000 meals).

Many of these numbers are based on manual entry into Microsoft Forms and may be undercounts of actual contact with students.

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SCHOOL SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

In past years, the Chamber Education Report committee has used a number of different metrics to offer a statement on the progress of Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS). These academic and non-academic measures have provided a great deal of insight into improvements that have been made and where gaps remain. While academics certainly remain a high priority, other data points included in earlier sections of this report (e.g., food and device distribution) speak to the additional responsibilities that fall upon public school systems, often without recognition or reward. Together with the academic data available this year, these metrics paint a more complete picture of how the system is functioning.

This year, many of the usual data points in this report either reflect information up until March (when schools closed as a result of COVID-19), provide numbers that have likely been impacted by COVID-19, or are unavailable for the 2019-2020 school year. One such data point is TNReady. Because of school closures in the spring, there are no results to present for school year 2019-2020. Last year, TNReady results suggested that the district had made much needed gains in academic achievement and that students were making significant growth. Indeed, the district moved from a state-designated status of "In Need of Improvement" to "Satisfactory" because of positive gains in critical areas. The Education Report has used the state assessment as one metric to gauge student achievement (though administration over the past several years has been filled with challenges). With pressure from local school systems, the Tennessee Department of Education has thus far indicated that TNReady will be administered in 2021 but that teachers and districts will be held harmless.

Given the limitations in available or reliable data, this section is more abbreviated than in years past. The sections that follow include available information from the district and state with the disclaimer that what is presented should be read with careful consideration of the current context.

Key Performance Indicators

Over the last several years, the district has selected four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to focus on from its strategic plan – literacy, numeracy, chronic absenteeism and the suspension rate for African American students. These are listed in the table below.

Key Performance Indicator	2019-2020 Results
Increase the percentage of students in every subgroup who meet or exceed their academic growth projections in Literacy from 55.4 percent to 60 percent by May 2020.	MAP results showed that 52.1 percent of students in grades 2-9 met or exceeded their growth projections. This does not meet the district's goal of 60 percent.
Increase Average Daily Attendance (ADA) from 94 percent to 95 percent by May 2020.	ADA was at 94.5 percent when schools closed in March. This falls below the district's goal of 95 percent.
Reduce behavior incident rates for all students while decreasing the rate of out-of-school suspensions of African-American students from 14.5 percent to 12.7 percent by May 2020.	The out of school suspension rate for African American students when schools closed in March was 11.3 percent. This exceeds the district's goals.
Increase the percentage of students in every subgroup who meet or exceed their academic growth projections in mathematics from 57.1 percent to 60 percent by May 2020.	MAP results showed that 55.5 percent of students in grades 2-9 met or exceeded their growth projections. This does not meet the district's goal of 60 percent.

The results presented show where the district was in meeting its goals as of the closing of schools in March. Three out of the four KPIs did not meet the district's goal for 2020. These are described in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Literacy and Mathematics - MAP Assessments

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment is used by the district to measure growth in literacy and mathematics. This nationally normed assessment is given three times a year in Metro Schools (typically in August, November and February). It is used to measure performance and growth over the course of the academic year. While literacy has been included previous years, MNPS added growth in mathematics as a 4th KPI for school year 2019-2020. The results show that the percent of students meeting or exceeding their academic growth projections in either literacy or mathematics did not meet the district's goal of 60 percent.

In the section that follows, we provide results for the 2019-2020 school year, along with results from the Fall 2020 assessment conducted virtually. While the district goal of 60 percent of students meeting growth projections in reading and math was not met at the end of the academic year, the Median Growth National Percentile (MGNP) shows that MNPS students made some growth at or above the national average (normed at 50) in both subjects. These numbers provide a gauge of where the district was prior to the pandemic and can serve to identify which groups might be the most vulnerable to learning loss stemming from school closures.

2019-2020 Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) - Reading, Grades 2-9

Grade	MEDIAN NATIONAL PERCENTILE			Median Growth National Percentile	% Students Meeting Projection
	August 2019	November 2019	February 2019		
2	34	34	41	54	54.7%
3	45	39	43	45	48.9%
4	42	38	44	51	52.9%
5	40	32	36	44	47.7%
6	38	33	37	49	52.0%
7	40	36	41	51	52.6%
8	43	41	44	57	56.8%
9	42	40	44	51	50.7%
2-9	40	37	41	50	52.1%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

A little over half (52.1 percent) of students in grades 2-9 met their growth projections in reading, falling several percentage points short of the 60 percent goal. This was consistent across most grades, with more eighth grade students (56.8 percent) meeting their projections than any other grade and coming closest to the 60 percent goal. Fifth graders had the fewest students meeting their projections, with just 47.7 percent. The MGNP for reading for students in grades 2-9 was 50, meaning the average MNPS student made more growth than half of all students across the country who were tested.

2019-2020 Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) - Mathematics, Grades 2-9

Grade	MEDIAN NATIONAL PERCENTILE			Median Growth National Percentile	% Students Meeting Projection
	August 2019	November 2019	February 2019		
2	34	34	41	56	58.5%
3	40	40	42	57	60.3%
4	38	36	39	50	52.4%
5	32	28	27	38	41.4%
6	26	24	27	53	56.7%
7	29	29	33	57	58.2%
8	33	32	34	57	59.7%
9	31	30	32	53	54.7%
2-9	34	32	35	53	55.5%


Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Compared to the 52.1 percent in reading, 55.5 percent of students in grades 2-9 met their growth projections in math. More third graders met their projections than any other grade, meeting the district's goal at 60.3 percent, while fifth graders again saw the fewest students meeting their growth projections (41.4 percent). All other grades saw more than half of students making growth in math. The MGNP was 53 in math, with the average MNPS students making more growth in math than a little over half of all students tested.

MAP Median National Percentiles by Student Group February 2019 and February 2020

	All Students	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged	English Learners	Students With Disabilities
Reading 2019	43	59	34	66	31	30	13	13
Reading 2020	41	57	34	65	27	27	9	14
Math 2019	35	55	26	56	25	23	11	7
Math 2020	35	55	27	59	23	23	8	8

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools



The previous table compares the February 2019 and February 2020 Median National Percentiles in reading and math across student groups. All students saw a slight dip in reading, from a MNP of 43 in 2019 to 41 in 2020. The greatest decreases were among English Learners (from 13 to 9), Hispanic students (from 31 to 27), and students who are economically disadvantaged (from 30 to 27). All other groups stayed largely consistent from one year to the next.

The results are similar in math. The MNP for all students in math stayed the same in 2019 as in 2020 (at 35). Most student group scores were flat, with slight dips for Hispanic students (from 25 to 23) and English Learners (from 11 to 8).

**MAP Median Growth National Percentiles by Student Group
February 2019 and February 2020**

	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>	<i>English Learners</i>	<i>Students With Disabilities</i>
Reading 2019	57	59	50	61	62	55	71	59
Reading 2020	50	56	46	57	47	46	43	47
Math 2019	55	59	49	60	56	51	59	52
Math 2020	54	59	48	59	54	50	54	46

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Turning to MGNPs, students in February 2020 saw lower growth national percentiles than those who took MAP in February 2019. In other words, the results suggest that students made more growth in reading and math in 2019 than they did in 2020. The most notable differences were in reading. While they had an overall MGNP of 57 in reading in 2019, students had a MGNP of 50 in 2020. These lower scores are consistent across student groups but there were greater decreases for certain students. Hispanic students (from 62 to 47), English Learners (from 71 to 43), students with disabilities (from 59 to 47) and students who are economically disadvantaged (from 55 to 46) show substantially lower scores in 2020 than their counterparts.

Growth in math stayed flat, with an overall MGNP of 55 in 2019 and 54 in 2020. Most student groups remained the same or were lower by two points or less. English Learners and students with disabilities were the exceptions. English Learners saw a five point decrease (from 59 to 54) while students with disabilities saw a decrease of 6 points (from 52 to 46).

MAP Median National Percentiles, August 2019 and August 2020


Grade	2019 Reading	2020 Reading	2019 Mathematics	2020 Mathematics
2	34	64	34	63
3	45	52	40	43
4	42	47	38	38
5	40	47	32	43
6	38	46	26	32
7	40	47	29	38
8	43	50	33	44
9	42	57	31	52

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Between August 17 and September 18, 2020, the district administered MAP to 38,000 students in grades K-9 with the explicit purpose of guiding instruction - not for evaluations or high stakes decision-making. Educators have been highly encouraged to use multiple measures to guide their formative assessment of student progress. Fewer students were tested in fall 2020 than the previous year, when 44,000 students were tested.

The fall assessment serves as a baseline for the year but the 2020 results have been analyzed and reported with a fair amount of nuance. Because students had not yet returned to school, the assessment was administered while students were learning from home. Though some deeper analysis on the part of the district concluded that student scores stayed largely consistent between 2019 and 2020, MNPS saw evidence of some score inflation, particularly at lower grades. This suggests that younger students may have received inadvertent help from family members as they were navigating the assessment. This was not a trend unique to MNPS as other comparable districts across the country saw similar findings in their MAP assessment.

Scores in reading and math for August 2020 show that all grade levels earned a higher MNP, compared to last year's cohort in the same grade. In reading, the biggest increase was in the second grade, with a 30-percentile difference (from 34 in August 2019 to 64 in August 2020). All other grade levels saw at least a five point difference between years. The 2020 math scores more closely reflected those of 2019. While second and ninth grades showed the greatest increase (29 percentile and 21 percentile, respectively) from 2019 to 2020, some grades showed no difference or a slight increase over the previous year. Fourth graders, for example, showed a MNP of 38 both years.



The district anticipates administering MAP two more times during the school year – in January and in May. With learning loss as a result of “COVID slide” of great concern, MAP data is likely the closest estimation available to understand how being out of the classroom has impacted learning for MNPS students, but it is not a perfect measure, especially when administered while students are learning remotely. Because of some drastic differences between 2019 and 2020, the district is approaching these results with caution, recognizing that the different testing environment for students has likely influenced assessment scores.

Attendance

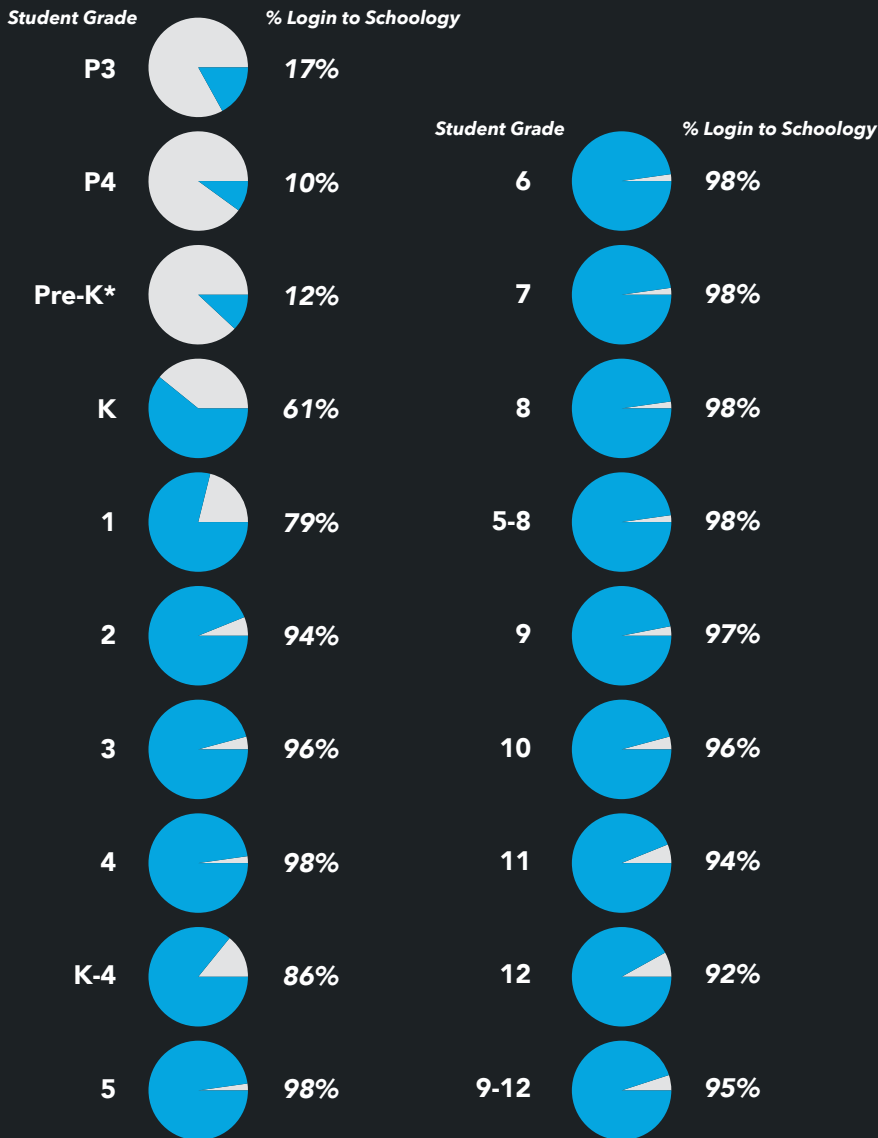
School closures in the spring meant the district was unable to continue to track attendance with fidelity. With many students lacking the ability or technology to attend virtual classes with their teachers, it was inequitable to mandate that students check-in every day. In addition, without a clear plan for remote learning, teachers did not have the guidance around what the expectations were for students. Starting in the fall, the district communicated to students, families and teachers that attendance would be tied to daily login to the district’s online learning management platforms and engagement in “learning opportunities ” defined in a number of different ways.

There are several measures that can be used to report student attendance, each with distinct definitions. The district uses Average Daily Attendance (ADA) as its KPI. ADA is the average number of students per day recorded as “present.” When schools closed in March, the ADA was at 94.5 percent, just half a percentage short of the district’s goal of 95 percent.

This school year, ADA is represented by the percentage of students logging into the learning management platforms like Schoology and FlipGrid. While FlipGrid is reserved for younger grades, most students are regularly using Schoology. Metro Schools’ average daily attendance rate as of November 30 was 91.5 percent.

In the tables that follow, we present two-week snapshots of Schoology logins to show what attendance looked like for students in the fall. In the period between November 2 and November 15, the percentage of early grade students (Pre-k-1) logging into the platform was substantially lower than higher grade students. Because Pre-K students use a different tool, only 12 percent of those students logged into Schoology. Starting with second grade, between 94 and 98 percent of students logged in during this two-week period. For grades K-4, 86 percent of students logged in, as did 98 percent of students in grades 5-8. Overall, 95 percent of high school students logged in, though each progressive grade shows a smaller percentage of students who did so.

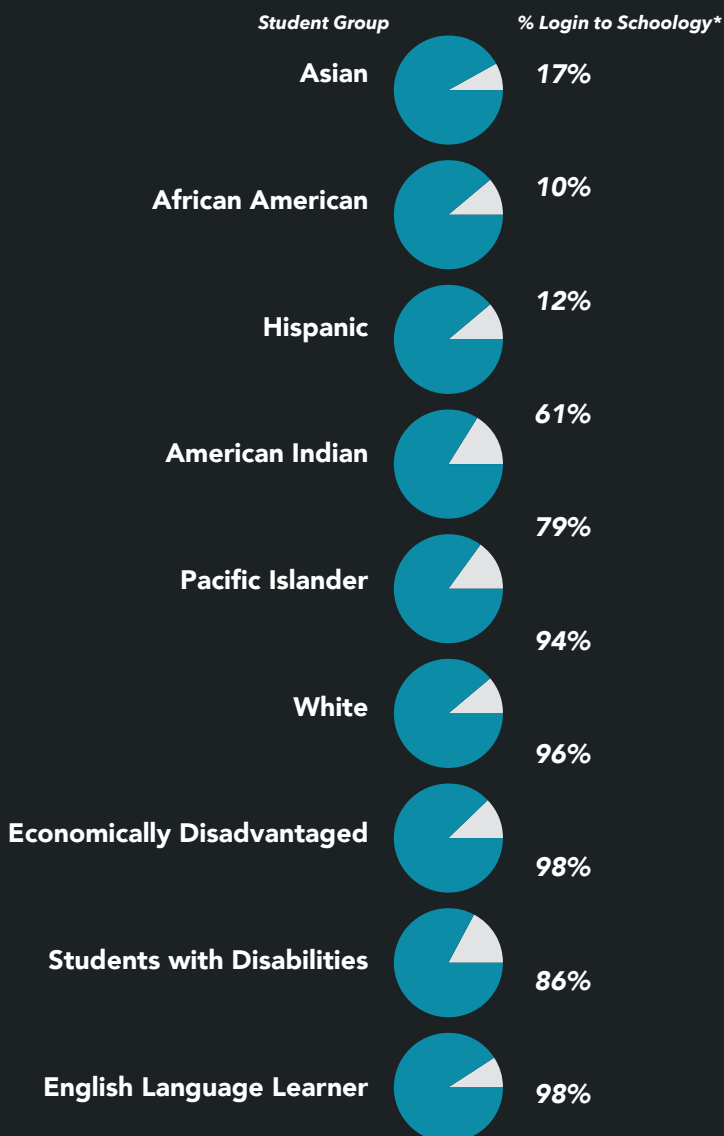
Login to Schoology, by Grade



*Pre-K uses a different tool.

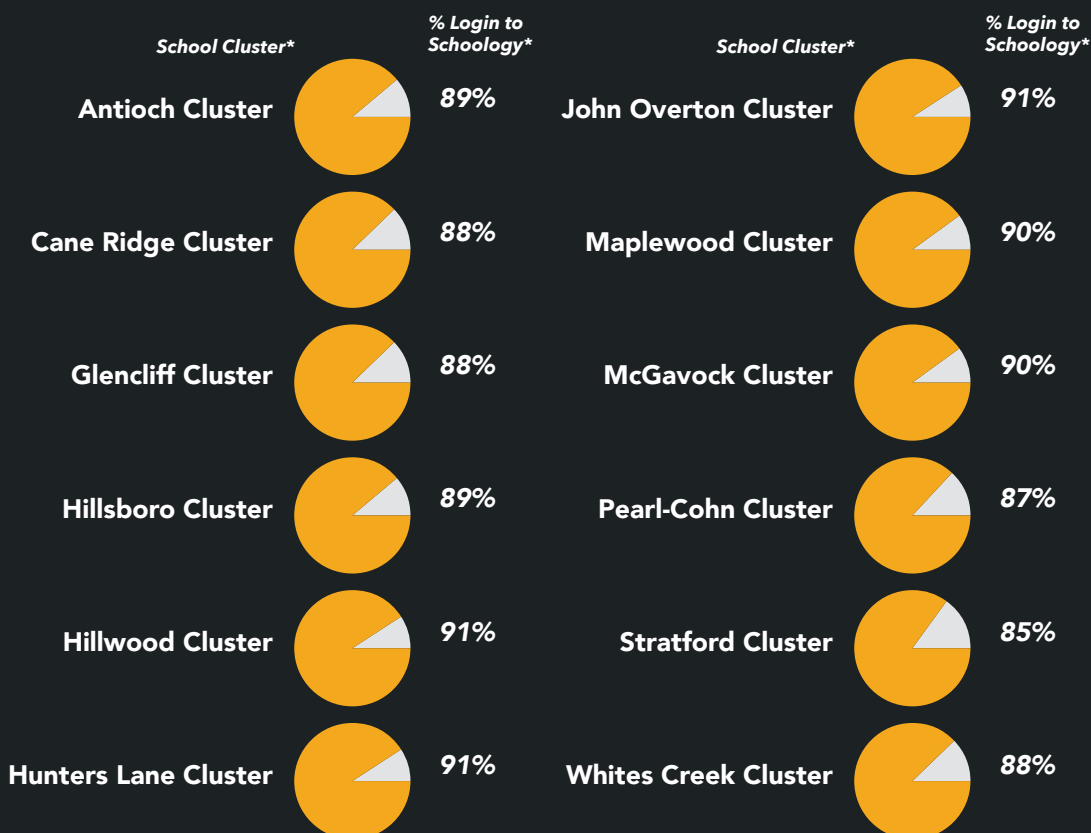
Looking across student groups shows some differences in the percentage of student logins. Asian students and English Learners have the highest percentage of students logging in, 92 percent and 91 percent respectively. Students with disabilities and American Indian students have the lowest percentages of student logins – 83 and 84 percent.

Login to Schoology, by Student Group



Across the 12 district clusters, student logins range from 85 – 91 percent. The Pearl-Cohn and Stratford clusters show the smallest percentage of students who logged in, at 87 and 85 percent respectively. The Hillwood, Hunters Lane and Overton clusters each show 91 percent of students logging in.

Login to Schoology, by School Cluster



Along with ADA, the Education Report also considers the chronic absenteeism rate as a primary measure of attendance. A student is considered “chronically absent” if they miss 10 percent of the days they were enrolled. For a typical school year with 180 days, a student would be “chronically absent” after missing 18 days. The Tennessee Department of Education captures chronic absenteeism in its State Report Card, though it does not have data for 2019-2020.

With the interruption to the school year, the available MNPS data for chronic absenteeism in 2019-2020 ends March 11 – the last day all students were in school. Without data from the remainder of the school year, it is hard to compare across years. The chronic absenteeism rates should be considered trends, not absolute figures. As of March 11, chronic absenteeism was at 16.2 percent, slightly higher than the number reported for the end of 2018-2019 (16 percent) but lower than in 2017-2018 (17.9 percent)



Chronic Absenteeism, 2008-2020

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i># Chronically Absent</i>	<i>% Chronically Absent</i>
2008-2009	74,067	10,526	14.2%
2009-2010	76,596	11,510	15.0%
2010-2011	78,105	12,386	15.9%
2011-2012	79,327	11,022	13.9%
2012-2013	81,024	12,178	15.0%
2013-2014	82,781	12,417	15.0%
2014-2015	85,309	12,958	15.2%
2015-2016	86,170	13,470	15.6%
2016-2017	86,735	14,679	16.9%
2017-2018	85,613	15,327	17.9%
2018-2019	84,989	13,564	16.0%
2019-2020	85,177	13,832	16.2%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: Available data as of March 11, 2020.

Prior to the pandemic, every student group but white and Asian was trending a higher chronic absenteeism rate than the year prior. Black students saw a minimal increase, from 20 percent to 20.4 percent, though it continues to be concerning that 1 out of 5 Black students has missed at least 10 percent of school days. The biggest increase appears to be with English Learners, whose rate increased from 10.7 in 2019 to 14 in 2020. While students who are economically disadvantaged or who have disabilities saw small increases of about two percentage points in 2020, it is striking that 1 out of every 4 students in these groups is considered chronically absent.

Chronic Absenteeism by Student Group

	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>	<i>English Learners</i>	<i>Students With Disabilities</i>
2018	18.1	8.7	21.2	15.8	16.3	25.5	14.6	26.1
2019	16.0	7.0	20.0	13.8	13.4	22.3	10.7	22.5
2020	16.2	6.3	20.4	13.8	14.1	24.1	14	24.4

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: Available data as of March 11, 2020.

The district’s truancy rate received a great deal of attention at the end of the fall semester, as some stakeholders point to these measures as an indication that students are not fully engaging in virtual learning. Because of differences in definition, truancy numbers are higher than those for ADA or chronic absenteeism. Truancy is defined by state law as a student who has five unexcused absences during the entire school year. Once a student misses five days, they are considered truant for the remainder of the academic calendar, regardless of regular attendance or academic performance. District numbers suggest the truancy rate is down this year. The current truancy rate for all MNPS students is about 30 percent, compared to 43 percent in 2018-2019, when complete data was last available. High school students are the most likely to be truant. This year, 41 percent of high school students are truant this year compared to 54 percent of high school students considered truant in 2018-2019.

Out of School Suspensions

The one KPI that was on track to exceed the district’s 2019-2020 goal was the decrease in out of school suspension rate for African American students. When schools closed in March, 11.3 percent of Black students had received out of school suspension, well below the 12.7 percent district goal.

Compared to their overall share of the MNPS student population, Black students are overrepresented in out of school suspensions. They make up nearly two-thirds of all out of school suspensions. Of the 6,886 students that were suspended before March 11, 65.4 percent were Black, compared to 66.8 percent in 2018-2019. While this suggests that the final number might have shown a slight improvement over the previous year if schools had remained open, the numbers available cannot be directly compared. For their part, Hispanic students make up 19 percent of students who were suspended, lower than their share of the total student population. However, data from the past several years show they make up an increasing portion of students who are suspended. Even without data from the last few weeks of school, Hispanic students already showed more than a two percent increase in their share of out of school suspensions compared to 2018-2019.

Out of School Suspensions, 2008-2020

Academic Year	Cumulative OSS Student	% Asian	% Black	% Hispanic	% White
2013-2014	10,837	1.2%	68.3%	12.5%	17.8%
2014-2015	10,408	1.1%	68.6%	12.4%	17.6%
2015-2016	10,263	1.2%	68.6%	13.2%	16.8%
2016-2017	8,456	1.4%	69.5%	13.0%	15.8%
2017-2018	8,823	1.2%	66.7%	16.1%	15.8%
2018-2019	9,143	1.0%	66.8%	17.1%	15.0%
2019-2020	6,886	1.0%	65.4%	19.2%	14.1%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: Available data as of March 11, 2020. Students who are American Indian or Pacific Islanders make up less than 1% of those suspended.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

The Education Report tracks several measures of college and career readiness. Graduation is not the most accurate measure of whether a student is ready for the next phase of their life but is an important metric when considering the retention of students. Despite the disruption to the school year, the 2020 graduation rate for MNPS stayed stagnant, dipping by just one-tenth of a percent from 82.4 percent in 2019 to 82.3 percent in 2020. Since 2011 (when the state’s calculation changed), the graduation rate has shown a steady, if irregular, increase over time. The state saw a similar pattern, with 89.6 percent of students graduating on time with a regular diploma, a one-tenth percent decrease from 2019 (89.7 percent).

MNPS Graduation Rates, 2010 - 2020

2010	82.9%
2011*	76.2%
2012	78.4%
2013	76.6%
2014	78.6%
2015	81.6%
2016	81.0%
2017	80.3%
2018	80.2%
2019	82.4%
2020	82.3%

*Tennessee’s graduation rate calculation changed in 2011
Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Disaggregated graduation data shows disparities across student groups. In 2019, nearly all student groups (Limited English Proficient being the exception) saw increases in their graduation rates. The class of 2020 looked quite different. Students who were economically disadvantaged (79.1 percent), in special education (64 percent), Black (84.4 percent), or white (87.1 percent) saw increases in their 2020 graduation rates. In contrast, students who were Limited English Proficient (62.7 percent), Hispanic (72.6 percent) or Asian (90.5 percent) saw notable decreases. For students who are Limited English Proficient, this was the lowest reported graduation rate since at least 2015, when their graduation rate was 73.5 percent.

MNPS Graduation Rates, by Student Group 2015-2020

Year	% Economically Disadvantaged	% Special Education	% Limited English Proficiency	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian	% White	% Total
2015	79.3%	54.6%	73.5%	81.4%	79.2%	86.4%	82.3%	81.6%
2016	79.5%	60.3%	71.7%	82.0%	75.5%	87.6%	81.9%	81.0%
2017	75.6%	58.2%	69.0%	81.6%	74.1%	88.0%	81.1%	80.3%
2018	75.7%	57.8%	66.6%	81.5%	72.6%	91.6%	82.2%	80.2%
2019	78.0%	61.3%	66.0%	82.8%	76.3%	93.8%	85.5%	82.4%
2020	79.1%	64.0%	62.7%	84.4%	72.6%	90.5%	87.1%	82.3%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Similar to graduation rate, MNPS saw drops in ACT scores and in the number of students participating, a result of school closures resulting from the pandemic. A score of 21 on the ACT is an important benchmark for most Tennessee students. This benchmark indicates college and career readiness and makes a student eligible for the HOPE scholarship. Participation in the ACT is mandatory for Tennessee high school graduates and the state has among the highest participation rates in the country. However, the State Board of Education opted to waive that requirement for 2020, along with other adjustments in response to the pandemic.



ACT Scores, by Student Group 2015-2020

Subgroup	# OF STUDENTS TESTED		AVERAGE ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		# OF STUDENTS SCORING 21+		% OF STUDENTS SCORING 21+	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
All Students	4570	4307	18.5	18.5	1388	1259	30.4%	29.2%
Asian	240	217	20.4	21.5	107	105	44.6%	48.4%
Black	2096	1909	17.3	17.1	429	355	20.5%	18.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hispanic	1014	1001	17.2	17	204	184	20.1%	18.4%
Native American	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White	1206	1172	21.4	21.6	639	612	53.0%	52.2%
Black/Hispanic/Native American	3120	2913	17.3	17.1	639	541	20.5%	18.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	2566	2316	16.8	16.9	457	389	17.8%	16.8%
Non-ED	2004	1991	20.7	20.4	931	870	46.5%	43.7%
English Language Learners*	511	603	14.5	14.4	21	24	4.1%	NA
Non-ELL	4059	3704	19	19.2	1367	1235	33.7%	33.3%
Students with Disabilities	445	381	15.3	15.1	41	32	9.2%	8.4%
Non-SWD	4125	3926	18.9	18.9	1347	1227	32.7%	31.3%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: The average ACT Composite scores shown above do not include scores for some students that would have been higher if SAT scores were converted to the ACT scale. The state only converts those SAT scores in very limited situations (e.g., the ACT score on file is below 21 but the SAT score converts to 21 or above).

The number of MNPS students who took the ACT decreased by more than 250 students, from 4,570 in 2019 to 4,307 in 2020. This decrease in participation was consistent across student groups, except for English Language Learners who increased their numbers from 511 in 2019 to 603 in 2020. Black students and those who were economically disadvantaged account for most of the participation losses. Whereas 2,566 economically disadvantaged students participated in 2019, 2,316 participated in 2020 – 250 fewer students than the previous year. In 2019, 2,096 Black students sat for the ACT. In 2020, the number dropped to 1,909, a loss of 187 students.

The 2020 average ACT composite score in MNPS stayed the same as the year prior, at 18.5. Some student groups saw slight increases in their scores. Asian students saw the largest increase, from 20.4 in 2019 to 21.5 in 2020. White students and those who are economically disadvantaged saw their scores slightly increase from 21.4 to 21.6 and 16.8 to 16.9, respectively. Students who were Black, Hispanic, English Language Learners, or had disabilities saw small declines – all 0.2 points or fewer.

The percentage of students scoring a 21 or greater also decreased from 30.4 percent in 2019 to 29.2 percent in 2020. The only group to see an increase in the share of students hitting this benchmark was Asian students, 48.4 percent of whom scored a 21 or higher in 2020 compared to 44.6 percent in 2019. All other groups saw moderate declines in their shares. MNPS will appeal the data in the spring and reported scores may increase.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The greatest assets in any school district are its teachers and the pandemic has certainly shown the importance of having a strong and robust teacher workforce. Across the state, teacher and staff shortages as a result of COVID diagnosis or exposure have forced classrooms and entire schools to shut down. Substitute teachers are not easy to find in a regular year, much less a year like this one.

New Teacher Hires, 2015-2020

Year	Total	Remained to Date	Attrition to Date	Remained End of Year	Left End of Year
2015	1045	93.6%	6.4%	73.8%	26.2%
2016	957	95.0%	5.0%	78.1%	21.9%
2017	930	95.6%	6.5%	78.7%	21.3%
2018	987	95.0%	5.0%	73.8%	26.2%
2019	1058*	93.8%	6.2%	80.6%	19.4%
2020	588	97.1%	2.9%	TBD	TBD

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

*Updated from the 2019 report to include new hires through May 2020

The data for teacher recruitment and retention for this year does not provide a great deal of context for the current staffing challenges in Metro Schools. However, these numbers paint some picture of where the district stood at the end of the 2019 school year and in fall 2020. Teacher recruitment and retention has been a consistent struggle for MNPS but the end of last school year saw some promising numbers. In 2019, MNPS recruited more new teachers than in recent years. A total of 1,058 new teachers were hired through May, with 80.6 percent remaining at the end of the year. The year prior 73.8 percent of new teachers remained into the end of the year. At the start of 2020, 588 new teachers were hired with 97.1 percent remaining to date. The overall retention rate for all teachers (not just new teachers) is 88.7 percent. The greatest retention rate is among Black teachers at 91 percent. Hispanic teachers have a retention rate of 86 percent.

2019-2020 Teacher Retention Rates

<i>All Teachers</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
88.7%	88.1%	91.0%	86.0%	88.6%	88.8%	88.3%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

The Education Report has highlighted teacher recruitment and retention numbers over the last several years to track how this workforce is shifting, though numbers have largely stayed the same. The MNPS teacher workforce is overwhelmingly female, at 79 percent. Just 21 percent of teachers are male. White teachers make up 72 percent of all teachers, while 23 percent are Black. Just 2 percent of teachers are Hispanic and less than 1 percent are Asian.

MNPS Teacher Race and Gender Demographics

	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>
Female	79.7%	79.5%	79.0%
Male	20.3%	20.5%	21.0%
White	71.4%	71.9%	72.2%
Black	25.2%	24.7%	23.0%
Hispanic	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%
Asian	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

There are stark differences in the race or ethnicity of teachers and students. White teachers account for 72.2 percent of all teachers but white students represent 28.2 percent of students. Black teachers represent 23 percent of teachers but 39 percent of students. Hispanic students make up 27.8 percent of all students but only 2 percent of teachers. Asian students make up about 5 percent of students but less than 1 percent of teachers.

MNPS Teacher and Student Race/Ethnicity Demographics, 2020-2021

	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Student</i>
White	72.2%	28.2%
Black	23.0%	39.0%
Hispanic	2.0%	27.8%
Asian	0.8%	4.6%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: Excludes charter schools

LOOKING AHEAD

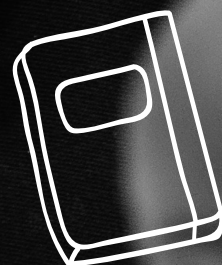
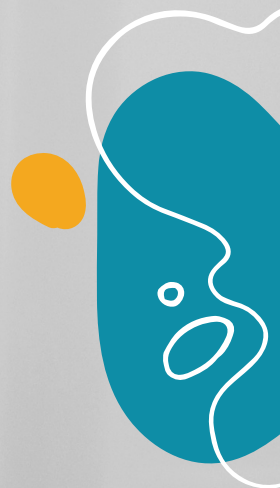
While the data reported in this section are typically used to inform an understanding of district performance across a number of academic and non-academic metrics, this year proved especially challenging for data collection. Even the data that was available and complete should be assessed with some level of nuance. As was suggested across several measures (MAP, ACT scores, graduation rate), the pandemic has had a significant impact on student learning.

Accurate and comprehensive information on learning loss is not available yet. MNPS and other districts across the country are working to better understand what the impact of this year will mean for students, especially those who have been out of school since March. For now, MAP data appears to be the best available to begin to plan for interventions for students most greatly hurt by their time outside of the physical classroom. We hope to have this information to present in next year's report, knowing that this disruption in learning will undoubtedly have long-term effects.

The academic preparation of students should be the first priority for any school system but COVID-19 presented MNPS with a much more urgent charge – the nutrition and well-being of children across the city. Some of the numbers presented in the “Challenges and Opportunities” section reflect the work of district staff and leadership to ensure the safety of MNPS students, including food and device distribution and referrals to community resources. We applaud the Metro Schools for what it was able to accomplish during a difficult and unconventional year – accomplishments that are rarely considered when assessing the performance of a district – and encourage the continued support of the community to help the district move forward beyond this year.



NUMBERS
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APPENDIX A

MNPS DEMOGRAPHICS AND ENROLLMENT

Metro Schools Enrollment and Demographic Trends, 2015-2020

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Enrollment Count	86,110	86,917	86,703	85,629	85,161	81,088
% Black	43.6%	43.0%	41.0%	41.6%	40.0%	39.9%
% Hispanic	21.1%	23.1%	24.1%	25.9%	28.3%	29.1%
% American Indian	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
% Caucasian	30.7%	29.4%	28.5%	28.0%	27.2%	26.5%
% Asian or Pacific Islander	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.4%	4.3%	4.1%
% Economically Disadvantaged	35.2%	40.3%	44.0%	45.1%	38.0%	36.7%
% Students with Disabilities	9.1%	10.2%	11.1%	12.2%	11.8%	12.5%
% English Language Learner	6.7%	9.2%	12.3%	16.2%	18.1%	19.4%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: Totals do not include Brick Church College Prep, Neely's Bend College Prep or Adult HS; Students who are economically disadvantaged are those whose families are directly certified and receiving certain government assistance.

Enrollment by School Tier, 2015-2020

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Pre-K	3,106	3,480	3,255	3,037	3,064	2,364
K-4	36,592	35,934	34,960	33,934	34,148	31,793
5-8	24,301	25,075	25,703	26,074	25,042	24,027
9-12	22,111	22,428	22,785	22,584	22,907	22,904
Total	86,110	86,917	86,703	85,629	85,161	81,088

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

APPENDIX B

MNPS BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Metro Nashville Public Schools Board of Education has nine elected members. Each member represents a geographic area (school district). The chart below represents the sitting board members for the 2020-2021 school year and the demographic breakdown of the students they each represent.

As stated in the Metro Charter, every 10 years the Metro Council and school board district lines are redrawn to maintain population balance. This process will begin again in 2021 when the U.S Census Bureau releases its updated population of Davidson County. Public input is requested in that planning.

District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	MNPS
No. of Schools	24	11	17	18	35	22	12	10	11	160
No. of students	7,355	9,287	7,570	8,864	16,640	13,846	7,133	5,264	5,099	81,058
% ED	57.7%	29.1%	45.2%	37.4%	38.5%	34.9%	35.6%	18.0%	25.8%	36.7%
% EL	7.7%	29.1%	21.1%	12.2%	9.8%	30.5%	44.5%	2.1%	12.6%	19.4%
% White	8.4%	34.0%	19.5%	35.7%	23.6%	18.4%	18.6%	56.5%	44.5%	28.8%
% Black	75.7%	17.6%	46.7%	39.4%	52.3%	34.2%	21.3%	31.5%	29.6%	38.7%
% Hispanic	15.0%	38.1%	32.3%	21.8%	20.6%	41.4%	56.7%	7.3%	18.8%	28.0%
% American Indian	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
% Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%
% Asian	0.4%	9.9%	1.1%	2.5%	3.2%	5.7%	3.1%	4.2%	6.4%	4.1%

Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Note: Totals do not include Brick Church College Prep, Neely’s Bend College Prep or Adult HS, Robertson Academy Gifted School

School Board Members

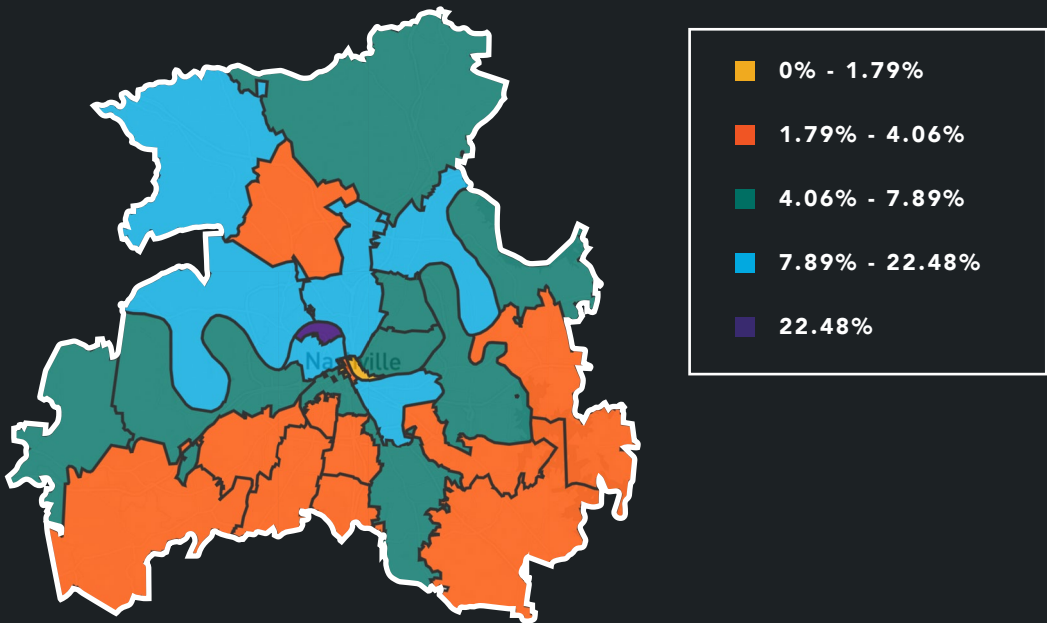
- District 1 **Dr. Sharon Gentry**
 District 2 **Rachael Anne Elrod**
 District 3 **Emily Masters**
 District 4 **John Little**
 District 5 **Christiane Buggs**
- District 6 **Fran Bush**
 District 7 **Freda Player-Peters**
 District 8 **Gini Pupo-Walker**
 District 9 **Abigail Taylor**

APPENDIX C

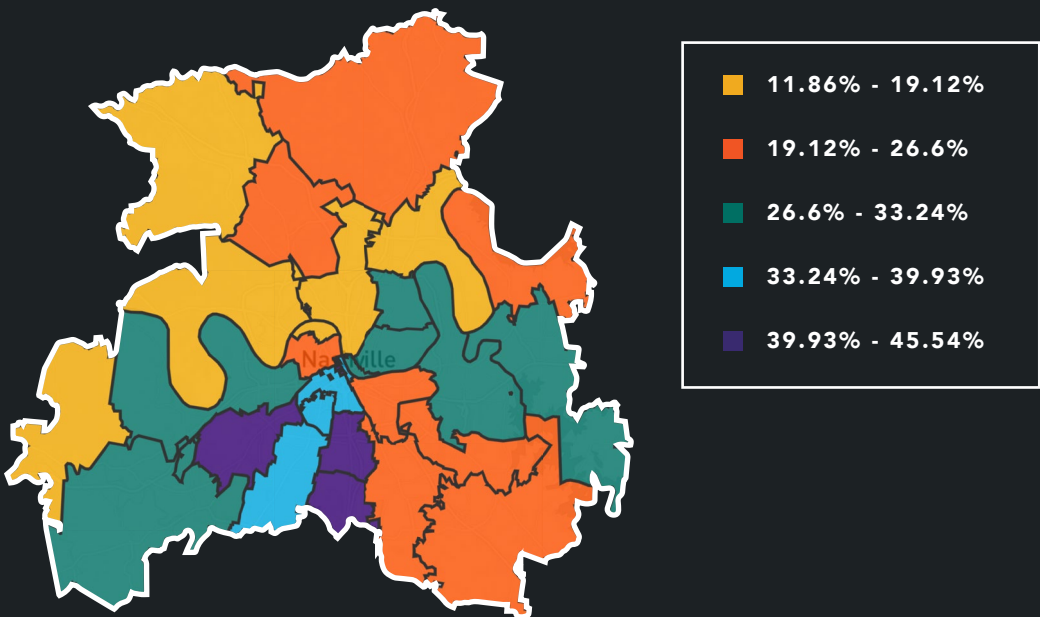
NASHVILLE DATA

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates.
Note: All maps generated by MySidewalk.

Household Without Internet Access Per Capita

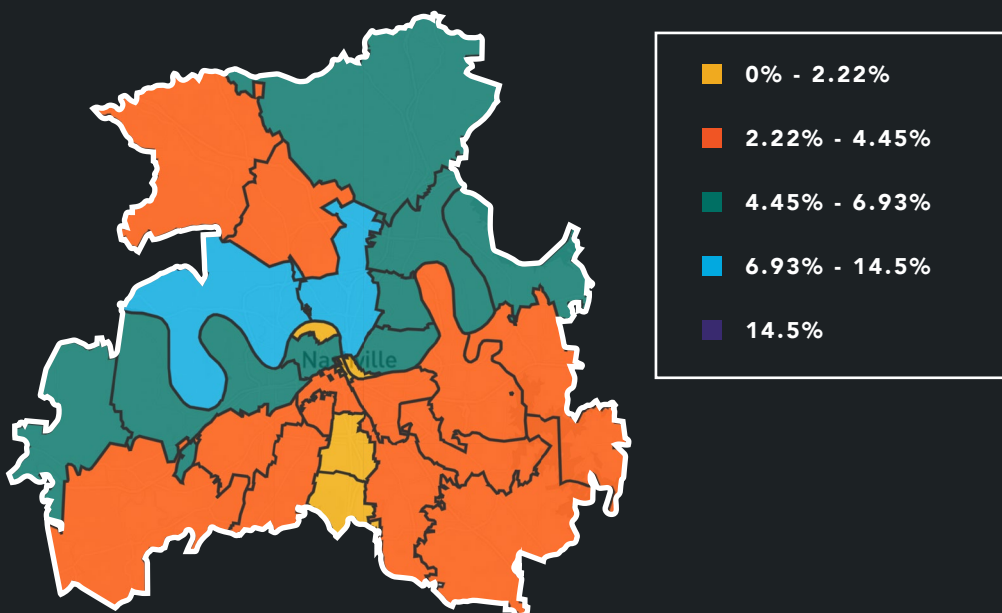


Educational Attainment: Bachelor's Degree Per Capita Over 25

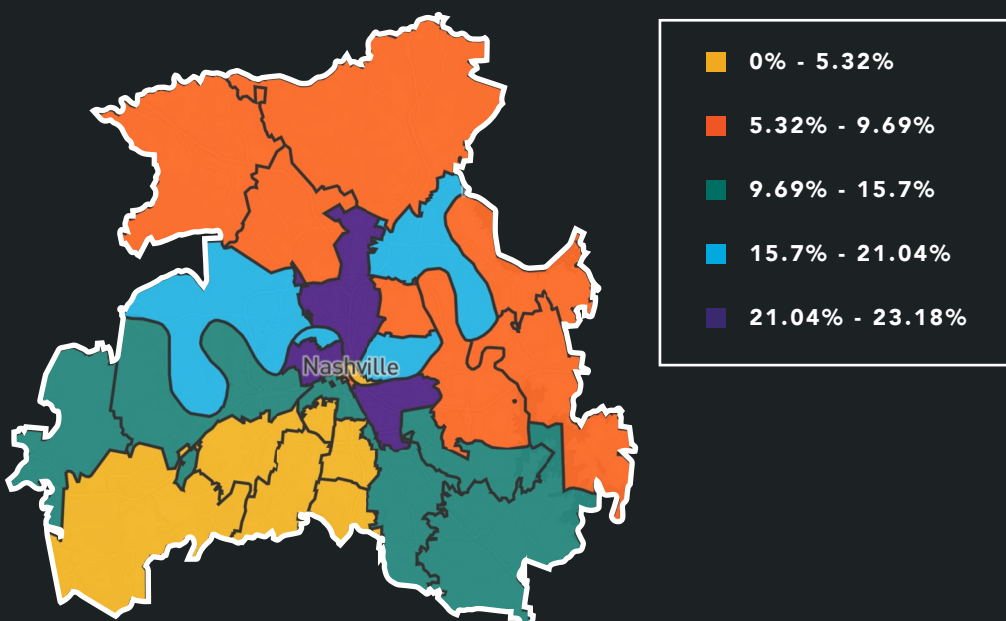


Unemployment Rate

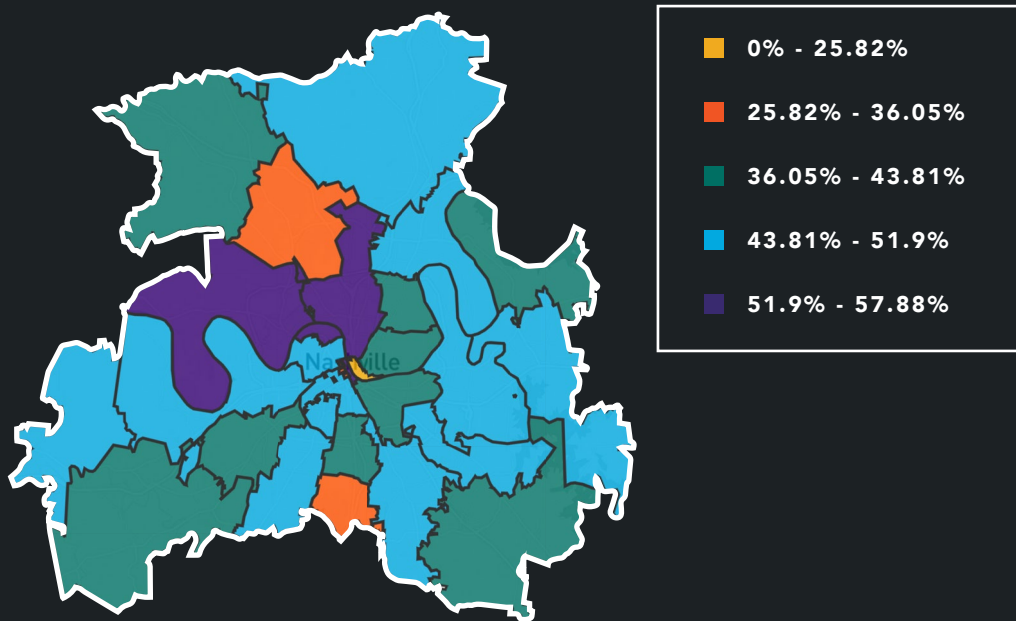
Note: Unemployment data was collected prior to COVID-19.



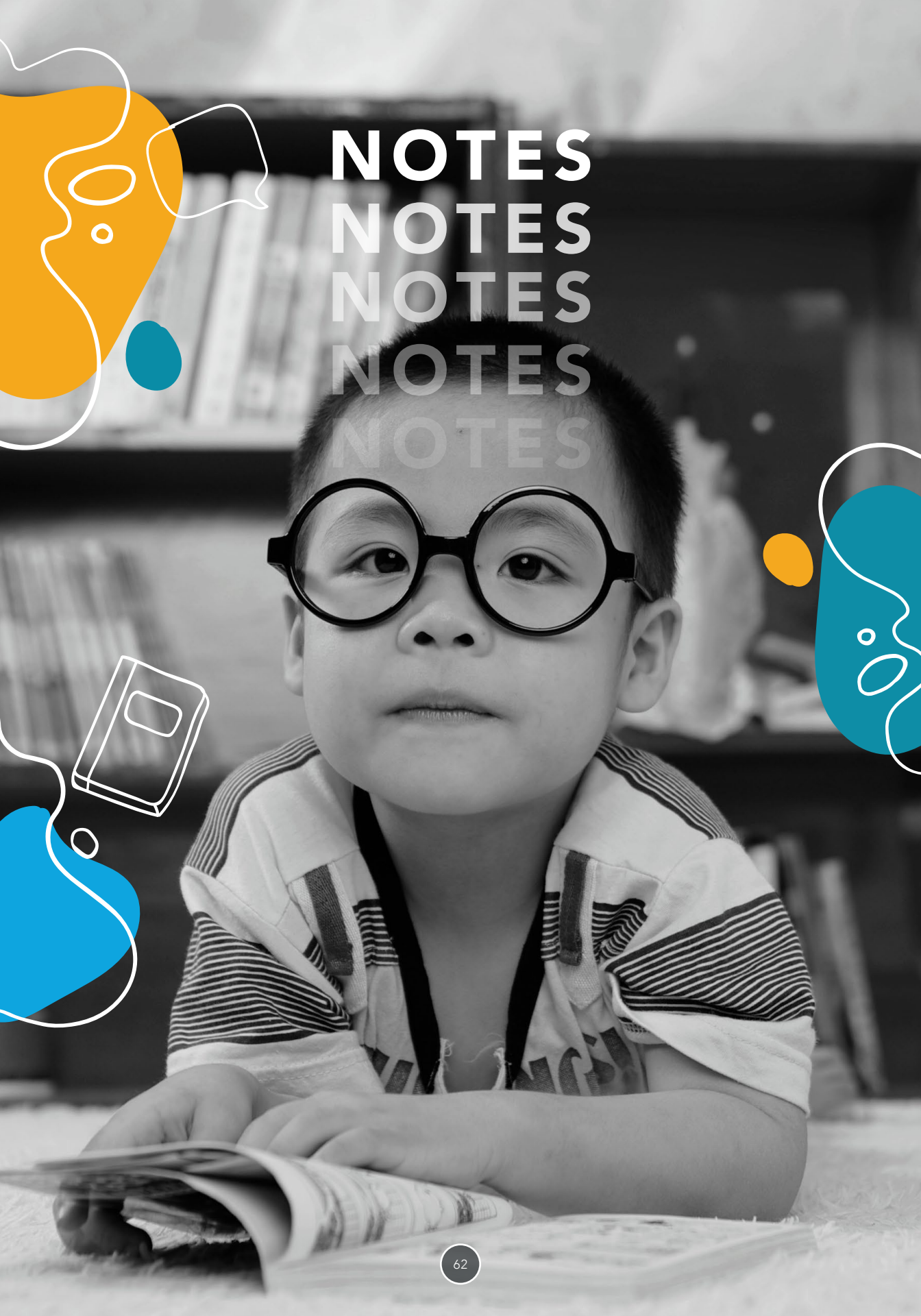
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP



***Excessive Renter Housing Costs: Gross Rent 30 Percent
or More of Income Per Renter Occupied Housing Unit***



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APPENDIX D

STATUS OF 2019

EDUCATION REPORT CARD

RECOMMENDATIONS



The Mayor, Director of Schools and MNPS School Board are presented with the Chamber Education Report in the hope that they will carefully consider its findings and recommendations. Every year, we assess whether the previous year's recommendations were implemented, partially implemented, or not implemented. For 2019, two out of the three recommendations were implemented and one was not implemented.

The Mayor's Office should convene MNPS, Metro departments, the nonprofit sector, business leaders and community stakeholders to craft a 2030 vision and aligned plan for a whole city approach to public education that is informed by an assessment of the needs of the school system and outlines cross-sector collaboration in addressing the gaps in support.

Not implemented (and included as a recommendation again in 2020).

The events of the past year revealed how important it is to have a whole city commitment to public education. Since March, MNPS has done much more than attempt to educate students in a new virtual environment. The school district has taken a lead on addressing widespread and longstanding challenges like food insecurity, the digital divide and access to information and resources for our most vulnerable community members. As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge the Mayor's Office to bring together the stakeholders necessary to create a citywide vision and aligned plan to strengthen support for Metro Schools. We applaud the Mayor for hiring Robert Fisher as his Senior Advisor for Education and chief liaison to Metro Nashville Public Schools, local higher education institutions, and other public, private, and nonprofit entities focused on improving outcomes for young people. Over the past several months, Fisher has worked to deepen relationships with a range of education stakeholders in Nashville and solicit their feedback on areas of opportunity in public education, including expanding enrichment activities and whole child supports. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of these growing partnerships.

MNPS should provide the community with an aspirational funding amount that reflects what a high-quality education costs in order to guide budgetary conversations and encourage more private-public partnerships.

Implemented (and included as a recommendation again in 2020).

Dr. Battle presented an aspirational budget at community meetings held in the spring to elicit stakeholder feedback (and made reference to the committee's recommendation). MNPS presented a "maintenance of effort" budget that outlined what it would take to maintain their current operations, as well as a series of budget improvements to meet the priorities of the Board. Although Metro Council did fund a step increase for staff and created a minimum wage for service employees, the budget crisis caused by COVID-19 meant that the city could not fund those priorities. With so much at stake for students and families in the coming year, the committee encourages MNPS to continue to present an aspirational budget – especially when difficult budget decisions have to be made – that shows what people, services and resources are taken away when the school system is not adequately funded.

MNPS should prioritize the reinstatement of a district leader to implement the equity framework that was developed prior to the dissolution of the Office of Equity and Diversity to drive the equity work in Metro Schools.

Implemented.

Earlier this year, Metro Schools hired Ashford Hughes to serve as the Executive Officer of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Over the past several months, Hughes has worked to develop a framework and a set of guiding principles for Metro Schools that support the goals of the district. Core to this work is also a racial equity lens that will clearly articulate the shared goals for the district, the intentional policies, investments and systemic change needed to reach these goals, and clear accountability structures to ensure that MNPS is actively making progress and course correcting where necessary. In the midst of a pandemic, this work is even more crucial to ensuring student's support and well-being, especially in light of the lessons learned about what it takes to meet students' technology, nutrition and other needs.



APPENDIX E

MNPS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



CLICK FOR ENLARGED ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

APPENDIX F

EXPERTS INTERVIEWED

Tennessee Department of Education

Commissioner Dr. Penny Schwinn

Office of Mayor Cooper

Robert Fisher, Education Advisor

MNPS School Board Members

Christiane Buggs, School Board Chair

MNPS Central Administration and Staff

Dr. Adrienne Battle, Interim Director of Schools

Chris Henson, Chief Operating Officer

Dr. David Williams, Executive Officer of Teaching and Learning

Dr. Mason Bellamy, Chief of Academics and Schools

Brian Hull, MNPS Director of Resource Strategy

Dr. Paul Changas, Executive Director, Assessment and Evaluation

Dr. Megan Cusson-Lark, Executive Director of School Counseling

Kyla Krengel, Director of Social Emotional Learning

Ashford Hughes, Executive Officer of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Debbie McAdams, Executive Director of Exceptional Education

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Media

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Maplewood High School

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Brent Dean, Academy Coach
Blaze Phillips, Academy Coach
Olivia Hall, Student Ambassador

LEAD Cameron Middle School

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Nicole Ivy, Teacher
Elizabeth Phelps, Teacher
Krystal Nichols, Teacher
Lindsay Roe, Teacher
Thomas Schoen, Instructional Coach
Abby Upperman, Instructional Coach

MNPS Virtual School

Dr. Kelby House Garner, Executive Principal
Brent Luther, Assistant Principal
Charles Van Hawk, Interventionist
Dr. Trina Edwards, Instructional Designer
Deborah Crosby, Instructional Designer
Adrienne McNew, School Counselor
William Gulden, Student
Alyson Meale, Student
Alexandra Klefstad, Student
Sofia Mayeux, Student

MNPS Liaison to the Committee

Tamara Fentress, Director of Planning and Project Management



GLOSSARY

ACT

A standardized test, typically taken in 11th grade, to measure high school achievement and college readiness. It is used by most colleges and universities as part of their admission decisions. Scoring a 21 or above on the ACT indicates college and career readiness and is one criterion of receiving a Tennessee Hope Scholarship. In the state of Tennessee, the ACT is required for graduation. As part of the state accountability systems, districts are required to have 95 percent student participation.

Asynchronous Teaching/Learning

A self-paced learning style where students are able to access materials or instructions without having to meet at the same place or time.

Basic Education Program (BEP) Funds

The funding formula through which state education dollars are generated and distributed to Tennessee school systems. The funds generated by the BEP are what the state has defined as sufficient to provide a basic level of education for Tennessee students.

Chronic Absenteeism

Missing 10 percent or more available school days in one academic year. For MNPS, there are 180 days in the academic year.

Community Achieves

District led wraparound service initiative operating out of the MNPS Support Services Department and based in nineteen local schools. Community Achieves has four pillars of support: College and Career Readiness, Parent/Family Engagement, Health and Wellness, Social Services.

Community School

School site where partnerships with community organizations and agencies work to provide comprehensive, wraparound services for students including academic assistance, family support, health supports and social services. MNPS has several community school models, including their in-house Community Achieves program, partnerships with Communities in Schools Tennessee, and school and community-based Family Resource Centers run by community organizations.

Economically Disadvantaged

A classification indicating a student is directly certified or receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (or food stamps), those whose families participate in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, students who are on the local school district liaison's list of homeless students, Head Start participants, migrant youth, runaways, foster children and others who may be certified by state or local officials. The definition narrowed in 2016. Previously, this included students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Students who have been assessed as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and are actively receiving services through the district. This also includes students who are fewer than two years removed from exiting the ELL program and continue to be monitored.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

This bipartisan measure was signed into law on December 10, 2015. It reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. A Tennessee specific ESSA plan was approved in August of 2017 and will be implemented in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

Coordinated and holistic approach to providing resources and services to families and students. Each center is a partnership of health and social service providers, residents, schools, businesses and faith-based organizations. There are eight community-based centers, and eleven school-based sites, including five elementary schools and five high schools, that are run by community organizations.

Flipgrid

Pre-K students will use Flipgrid. This is a simpler tool for the youngest children and can be accessed via cell phone devices.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Data tied directly to the MNPS strategic plan and collected to measure district progress. KPIs fall under four areas: Our Students; Our People; Our Organization; Our Community.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

A classification for students who have limited ability to speak, read, write and understand English. This includes those who are actively receiving English Learner interventions in school as well as those who opt out of services.

Measure of Academic Progress (MAP)

A computerized adaptive test and benchmark assessment that students grades 2-9 take three times a year for Reading and Math. MAP is a measure of student growth over time and helps teachers, parents, and administrators know how their student is making progress. MNPS adopted Map-Reading in Winter of 2016 and Map-Math in Fall of 2017.

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)

School district servicing students and families in Nashville-Davidson County. Enrollment is approximately 86,000 students with 11,000 employees and 167 schools.

Remote Learning

Learning that is utilized through an online platform. Students are not physically present in a traditional classroom.

Restorative Practices

Sets of processes and tools that seeks to repair harm and rebuild community trust after an offense by way of holistic alternatives, like dialogue and mediation, to traditional disciplinary policies and practices. All parties affected have the opportunity to participate in its resolution.

Schoology

The platform we'll use across all of our schools for grades K-12 to support virtual learning for our students. the place where students engage with lesson modules; receive assignments, tests, grades, and feedback, and have robust discussions. In this way, Schoology will serve as the virtual classroom and platform for instruction and communication.

Synchronous Teaching/Learning

Live online classes that are typically scheduled with an instructor similar to an in-person classroom.

TNReady

Part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) suite, TNReady is designed to assess student understanding and is better aligned to college-readiness standards. Students in third through eighth grade take assessments in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. High school students take English I-III, Algebra, U.S History/Geography, and Biology or Chemistry.

Truancy

Defined by state law for students who have five unexcused absences during a school year. This does not have to be five consecutive days.

Virtual Learning

Learning and instruction that is commonly utilized through an online platform using videos and technology incorporated in their learning. Student can be physically present in a traditional classroom or be remote and at home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce remains committed to quality public education in the region and has produced some version of this report since 1992. Chamber Education Report committee members are business and community leaders from across Nashville who met weekly over the past several months do a deep dive into the successes, challenges and opportunities of Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS). This report is a product of school visits (virtual, this year), analyses of numbers and data and conversations with city and district leadership, school administrators, teachers, students and parents.

The production of this report would be impossible without the insight and expertise of the MNPS community and without stakeholders outside of the district. Thank you to all our experts who spent time with the committee at our weekly meetings and outside of them. We want to especially express our heartfelt and immense gratitude to Tamara Fentress, MNPS Director of Planning and Project Management and liaison to the committee. Over the past several years, Tamara has connected Chamber staff and committee members to experts within Metro Schools and graciously answered numerous follow-up emails. She has also provided invaluable insight into the history of Metro Schools and ensured the committee had as much information as possible when writing the report.

The best part of the committee's work happens during school visits. Because of the pandemic, committee members were not able to spend time inside the physical school building, but we were fortunate to have several MNPS principals and staff open their doors (virtually) to us. A special thank you to the faculty, staff and students of Warner Arts Magnet Elementary School, Maplewood High School, LEAD Cameron and the MNPS Virtual School. These school visits served to highlight the excellent work taking place in Metro Schools every day – even in a new virtual environment. We wish to thank these school communities for spending time with us and for their transparency.

A big thank you to the Chamber's communication team – Landon Matney, Graphic Designer & Brand Manager, Nathan Wingate, Digital Storyteller & Content Strategist, and Dawn Cornelius, VP of Marketing & Communications – who provided the graphic visioning for the printed report and were truly the creativity behind the 2020 presentation.

We would like to recognize five individuals who have served three consecutive years on the committee – Ryan Balch, Laquita Stribling, Bob Bernstein, Gary Cowan, Ashley Northington, LeShane Greenhill and Burkley Allen. Their contributions over the past several years have been immense and we thank them for their service as they rotate off the committee at the completion of this report.

The Chamber Education Report is the collective work of many. We hope it spurs dialogue and action around the progress of our public schools while serving as an important resource for education stakeholders and all Nashvillians. A big final thank you to everyone who helped put the 2020 Chamber Education Report together – this could not happen without you!

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A black and white photograph of a young Black female student wearing a large headset, looking intently at a laptop screen. The image is partially obscured by colorful abstract shapes and icons.

2020 CHAMBER EDUCATION REPORT

