



ALIGNMENT[®] NASHVILLE ACTION REPORTS

Dear friend of public education,

We are pleased to share Alignment Nashville's 2025–2026 Action Reports, highlighting another year of bringing our community together to better serve the students and families of Metro Nashville Public Schools. These reports showcase our Collaborative Initiatives, Nashville Hub, and special projects while demonstrating how strategic collaboration accelerates decision-making, strengthens partnerships, and creates lasting, system-level change for our community.

Throughout this year, our work centered on the simple but powerful belief that students achieve more when schools and community partners work together. As the backbone organization supporting this work, Alignment Nashville convenes cross-sector leaders, aligns community efforts with school priorities, and helps transform ideas into coordinated action. This year, that's looked like strengthening college and career readiness supports, improving out-of-school-time opportunities, supporting English learner families, elevating student voice, promoting youth health and adult wellness, and convening hundreds of school and community stakeholders around positive schools.

We're also proud of the continued innovation of our program, Nashville Hub. Through new professional learning experiences, expanded consulting services, and updated Freshman Seminar resources, the Hub supported communities across the country while continuing to strengthen and sustain the nationally recognized Academies of Nashville.

We are especially grateful to our 2025–2026 funders—Metro Nashville Public Schools, Metro Nashville Government/Office of the Mayor, and The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. Their investment serves as a powerful multiplier, enabling Alignment Nashville to convene the right partners, align resources, and maximize the impact of every dollar invested in Nashville's students.

As we look ahead, we remain inspired by what we can accomplish together. Thank you for your partnership and for your continued commitment to ensuring every MNPS student has the opportunity to succeed.

With gratitude,

Heather Chalos, Interim President & CEO

25 26

BY THE NUMBERS

322 individuals engaged,
representing **129 organizations**
through **6 Collaborative
Initiatives**

Resources aligned in the
amount of **\$422,485**



Students enjoying Out of School Time programming



Colin Kaepernick speaks at the 2026 Positive Schools Conference



Team members participating in a Collaborative Initiative meeting





ACTION REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Academies of Nashville Taskforce	3
College Access & Success A-Team	7
English Learners Collaborative	11
Nashville Hub	15
Out of School Time Collaborative	18
Positive Schools Conference	22
Youth Health Equity Collaborative	25



ACTION REPORT

ACADEMIES OF NASHVILLE TASKFORCE

25
26
—

As the backbone organization supporting the Academies of Nashville, Alignment Nashville typically convenes and facilitates the Academies of Nashville Steering Committee, which monitors the progress of the Academies of Nashville and supports continuous growth and improvement across the system. During the 2025–26 year, we intentionally paused the Steering Committee to convene and facilitate the Academies of Nashville Taskforce to foster collaboration across departments and stakeholder groups. This neutral convening role enabled participants to align around shared priorities, identify barriers to implementation, and develop recommendations to strengthen the Academies of Nashville system.



The 2026 Academies of Nashville Students of the Year, courtesy of MNPS Communications

ACADEMIES OF NASHVILLE TASKFORCE

**25-26
OUTCOMES**

KEY FINDINGS

- Academies of Nashville should be understood as a system, not a standalone program.
- The student experience must be the starting point.
- Data should drive continuous improvement, but it must be accessible and usable.

During the 2025–26 school year, the Academies of Nashville Taskforce focused on strengthening districtwide clarity, coherence, and implementation of the academy model across MNPS high schools. The Taskforce served as a space to examine how the Academies of Nashville can function not simply as a program, but as a comprehensive system designed to improve the high school student experience and prepare students for college, career, and life after graduation.

A central theme across the year was the need to reconnect the structures of the academy model to their purpose: ensuring that every student is known, supported, engaged in meaningful learning, and able to make clear connections between high school and postsecondary opportunities. The group explored how academy structures, CTE pathways, counseling, work-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction, and postsecondary readiness metrics can operate as aligned components of one coherent high school strategy.

The Taskforce also identified several areas where additional clarity and action are needed, particularly as MNPS enters a new phase of high school strategy and leadership. These include defining the ideal Academies of Nashville student experience, clarifying the characteristics of strong pathways, strengthening CTE instructional quality and consistency, using data more effectively for continuous improvement, and supporting principals with clear expectations, tools, and follow-up structures.

The Academies of Nashville Taskforce focused its work in three interconnected areas: System Alignment, Student Experience & Pathway Quality, and Implementation & Continuous Improvement. These categories reflect the Taskforce's belief that improving student outcomes requires not only a clear vision for the student experience, but also aligned systems and structures, as well as ongoing processes to support implementation and improvement across schools.



**Members of the Taskforce
take a selfie after a meeting
during the 25-26 school year**

ACADEMIES OF NASHVILLE TASKFORCE

25-26 OUTCOMES

System Alignment: The Task Force worked to strengthen alignment across district initiatives, departments, and leadership structures to ensure that the Academies of Nashville functions as a coherent system supporting student success.

- Conducted a comprehensive review of the current state of the Academies of Nashville model, identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
- Created stronger alignment between Academies of Nashville planning and broader district priorities related to College and Career Readiness (CCR), Ready Graduate outcomes, graduation success, and instructional improvement.
- Facilitated cross-functional collaboration among leaders responsible for college and career readiness, counseling, CTE, school leadership, and instructional support, resulting in greater coordination of high school strategy.
- Developed recommendations to strengthen clarity around district expectations, roles, responsibilities, and ownership of key components of the Academies of Nashville model.

Student Experience & Pathway Quality: The Taskforce prioritized defining and strengthening the experiences that prepare students for success after high school, with a particular focus on pathway quality, instructional relevance, and equitable access to opportunities.

- Identified the need for a districtwide definition of the desired Academies of Nashville student experience and began discussions around refreshing the Portrait of a Graduate/Ready Graduate framework.
- Examined findings from the Education Strategy Group (ESG) CTE instructional review and identified instructional quality, interdisciplinary learning, and pathway coherence as priority areas for future improvement.
- Developed greater clarity around the characteristics of high-quality pathways, including student access, flexibility, alignment to postsecondary opportunities, and meaningful career-connected experiences.
- Reinforced the importance of connecting classroom instruction, career exploration, advising, work-based learning, and postsecondary planning into a seamless student experience.

Implementation & Continuous Improvement: The Taskforce focused on creating the structures, processes, and supports necessary to translate strategy into action and drive ongoing improvement across schools.

- Surfaced and documented key implementation challenges facing schools, including competing priorities, pathway flexibility, school autonomy, role clarity, and communication needs.
- Identified opportunities to strengthen the use of data for continuous improvement, including pathway scorecards, CCR data, student intent surveys, National Student Clearinghouse data, and pathway participation metrics.
- Developed recommendations for a more intentional continuous-improvement process that uses data to inform pathway quality, instructional practices, and student outcomes.
- Developed plans for a yearlong cycle of professional learning, reflection, and improvement that extends beyond one-time meetings and supports ongoing implementation.

25-26 LEADERSHIP

Matt Nelson (MNPS)

25-26 ALIGNMENT STAFF

Melissa Jagers (Alignment Nashville)

Robert Robinson (Alignment Nashville)

25-26 ROSTER

Sanjana Ballal-Link (MNPS)

Joe Gordon (MNPS)

Shelley Mendez (MNPS)

Emily Munn (MNPS)

Tess Yates (MNPS)

ACTION REPORT

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS A-TEAM

25
26

The College Access & Success A-Team brings together Metro Nashville Public Schools, higher education institutions, workforce partners, community-based organizations, and youth-serving nonprofits to strengthen postsecondary access and success for Nashville students. Building on the team's previous work around FAFSA completion, college access partnerships, and school-community collaboration, the 2025–2026 school year focused on improving transitions from middle school to high school and creating more coherent pathways to college, career, and credential attainment.



A-Team members at the September 2025 meeting

Throughout the fall, the A-Team engaged in a structured planning and consensus-building process centered on a key question: How can MNPS and community partners work together to better support students as they transition from middle school into high school? Partners explored current transition supports, reviewed district priorities, examined barriers impacting student success, and developed a shared vision for what successful transitions should look like for students, families, schools, and community organizations.

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS A-TEAM

**25-26
OUTCOMES**

KEY FINDINGS

- Strong middle-to-high school transitions are critical to long-term academic and postsecondary success.
- Families need clearer information about pathways, graduation requirements, and postsecondary options.
- Experiential learning opportunities are among the most impactful strategies for increasing student engagement and future readiness.
- Transition supports must be responsive to the unique needs of diverse student populations.
- Shared infrastructure, consistent communication, and aligned partnership strategies are foundational to sustainable systems change.

2025-2026 outcomes included:

- Conducted a collaborative planning process focused on improving middle school to high school transitions
- Identified and documented existing transition supports provided by schools, nonprofits, colleges, universities, and community organizations
- Elevated student and family voice by discussing barriers faced by working students, undocumented students, and other populations requiring differentiated supports
- Facilitated cross-sector discussions around career exposure, experiential learning, dual enrollment, industry credentials, workforce readiness, and postsecondary planning
- Established a shared framework for future action planning focused on reducing fragmentation and creating more coherent student pathways from middle school through postsecondary education

A significant focus of the year's work was supporting MNPS's evolving College and Career Readiness strategy. Partners gained a better understanding of MNPS's College Access vision and the Academies of Nashville model. They also learned about supports that help students transition successfully from middle to high school, including the PreACT for all eighth-grade students, academic advising, career exploration, advanced coursework, and opportunities to explore Academy pathways and future careers. Partners also shared ways they currently support students transitioning between middle and high school. The A-Team examined how community organizations, higher education institutions, employers, and schools can work together to provide students with earlier exposure to college and career opportunities.



Snapshots of 2026 recipients of University MNPS scholarships,
courtesy of MNPS Communications

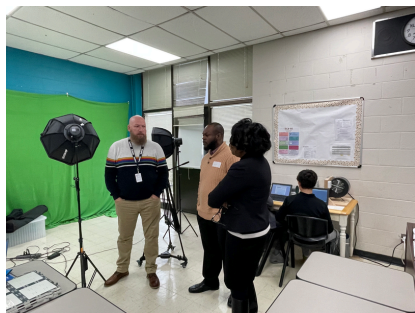
COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS A-TEAM

25-26 OUTCOMES

A-Team members visited a Career & College Readiness (CCR) Lab at JT Moore Middle School to explore how hands-on career exposure can strengthen students' transition from middle to high school. As part of Metro Nashville Public Schools' Innovative School Models initiative, the lab provided students with opportunities to rotate through immersive career modules—including health sciences, construction, and technology—where they completed real-world, hands-on tasks. Team members observed high levels of student engagement, independence, and problem-solving as students navigated multi-step learning experiences.

The visit also prompted discussion about how Career & College Readiness labs, STEAM programs, career clubs, and other middle school models could work together to expand students' exposure to career pathways before high school. Members reflected on how these experiences could strengthen advising conversations, support more informed high school decision-making, and encourage earlier family engagement around academic and career planning. The visit reinforced the value of experiential learning as an important bridge between middle school exploration and high school pathways.

Building on these discussions, the College Access & Success A-Team developed an 8th Grade Transition Pilot to strengthen the transition from middle school to high school through a more coordinated, systems-based approach. The pilot will bring together MNPS schools, community organizations, higher education partners, and employers to ensure participating students receive four core transition experiences before entering 9th grade: career exploration, college exposure, individualized advising and planning, and awareness of available high school pathways. By piloting the framework in a small group of middle schools, the team will evaluate strategies for coordinating partner efforts, tracking student participation, and leveraging existing district initiatives to create a more seamless transition experience. Lessons learned will help inform recommendations for expanding transition supports and strengthening college and career readiness opportunities across Metro Nashville Public Schools.



Scenes from the A-Team's visit to JT Moore Middle School's CCR Lab in January 2026

25-26 LEADERSHIP

Sanjana Ballal-Link (MNPS)
Sherica Clark Nelms (Martha O'Bryan Center)

25-26 ALIGNMENT STAFF

Robert Robinson (Alignment Nashville)
Nathan Shulman (Alignment Nashville)

25-26 ROSTER

Sigfredo Amaya (Conexión Américas)
Adam Brewer (MNPS)
Lee Gray (Oasis Center)
Karina Gutierrez-Molina (YMCA of Middle Tennessee)
Dr. Yolanda Jackson (MNPS)
Dwight Johnson (Preston Taylor Ministries)
Laura Moran (Nashville State Community College)
Derek Nido (Vanderbilt University)
Whitney Schulze (MNPS)
Chaerea Snorten (MNPS)
Evann Vrana-Gerber (Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce)

ACTION REPORT

ENGLISH LEARNERS COLLABORATIVE

25
26

The English Learners Collaborative (ELC) continued to serve as a cross-sector partnership between Metro Nashville Public Schools and community organizations supporting immigrant, refugee, and multilingual families across Nashville. The Collaborative brings together educators, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, faith-based partners, and advocacy groups to strengthen coordination, improve access to resources, and ensure English learner (EL) students and families receive meaningful academic, social-emotional, and community support.

Throughout the 2025–2026 school year, the Collaborative focused heavily on responding to evolving challenges impacting English learner students and families, while continuing to align with the MNPS EL Department’s strategic priorities around academic achievement, family engagement, inclusion, and equitable access to services.

Meetings centered on student outcome data, attendance trends, academic performance, graduation rates, community outreach, family learning opportunities, and the broader policy landscape affecting immigrant communities.



**Discussion groups
at the February 2026
ELC meeting**

ENGLISH LEARNERS COLLABORATIVE

25-26 OUTCOMES

KEY FINDINGS

- English learner students continue to demonstrate strong academic growth across multiple content areas.
- Graduation rates for English learner students and several historically underserved groups have improved over time.
- Inclusive instructional models and co-teaching approaches are helping expand access to grade-level coursework.
- Immigration-related fear and uncertainty continue to negatively impact attendance and family engagement.
- Strong family-school relationships remain critical to improving student outcomes and school connectedness.

The Collaborative placed a strong emphasis on data-informed decision making and collective problem-solving. MNPS district leaders regularly shared updates related to EL enrollment, attendance, discipline, graduation rates, academic proficiency, and growth metrics.

Collaborative discussions highlighted several major themes throughout the year:

- Significant academic growth among EL students across multiple subject areas and grade levels
- Continued implementation of inclusive instructional models centered on grade-level access and co-teaching supports
- Growing concern around absenteeism linked to immigration-related fears, housing instability, and family disengagement
- The importance of culturally responsive family engagement and parent learning opportunities
- Increased need for coordinated advocacy, resource sharing, and rapid response communication among community partners
- The need to support newcomer students and families navigating unfamiliar educational systems and standardized testing environments

The Collaborative additionally reinforced the importance of strengthening systems-level coordination between schools and community organizations. Discussions throughout the year emphasized:

- Expanding family access to multilingual communication and learning opportunities
- Supporting stronger relationships between schools and immigrant families
- Improving awareness of student rights and available community resources
- Increasing collaboration between school staff and community-based organizations
- Using data and community voice to guide decision making and resource allocation
- Creating welcoming and inclusive school environments that support belonging and academic success

ENGLISH LEARNERS COLLABORATIVE

25-26 OUTCOMES

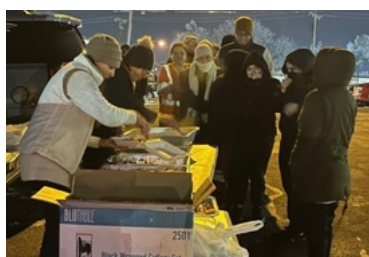
KEY FINDINGS

- Many newcomer and refugee students require additional support navigating standardized testing environments.
- Community organizations play a vital role in connecting families to resources, advocacy, and educational opportunities.
- Multilingual parent learning opportunities and ESL classes remain a significant area of community need.
- Partners emphasized the importance of culturally responsive communication, trust-building, and belonging.
- Ongoing collaboration between schools and community organizations strengthens support systems for immigrant and refugee families.

The Collaborative also continued to elevate community-informed strategies and culturally responsive practices. Partners shared updates related to bilingual programming, youth leadership initiatives, refugee and immigrant outreach, anti-bullying efforts, parent advocacy, and expanded access to ESL and family learning opportunities.

During the spring, Collaborative meetings shifted to focus more directly on legislative developments and the growing uncertainty impacting immigrant and refugee families. Partners discussed the emotional, educational, and operational impacts of policy changes and community fear, while emphasizing the importance of trust-building, coordinated communication, and maintaining strong school-community relationships.

As the needs of immigrant and multilingual communities continue to evolve, the English Learners Collaborative is well positioned to serve as a trusted space for partnership, learning, and coordinated action. By deepening relationships, sharing resources, and aligning efforts across sectors, the Collaborative will continue working toward more equitable opportunities and stronger outcomes for English learner students and their families.



Snapshots of programming held this year by EL Collaborative member organizations: Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (left), American Muslim Advisory Council of TN (middle), Nations Ministry Center (right)

25-26 LEADERSHIP

Molly Hegwood (MNPS)
Vanessa Lazón (MNPS)
Monica Reyna (MNPS)
Jazmin Ramirez (Barrio Education &
Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition)

25-26 ALIGNMENT STAFF

Nathan Shulman (Alignment Nashville)

25-26 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American Muslim Advisory
Council
Catholic Charities
Conexion Americas
EdTrust
Elmahaba Center
Hispanic Family Foundation

Hispanic Family Foundation
Legacy Mission Village
Metro Nashville Police
Department
MNPd Family Intervention
Program
Metro Nashville Public Schools

Nations Ministry Center
Nashville International Center
for Empowerment (NICE)
Planned Parenthood of TN
Siloam Health
Tennessee Immigrant and
Refugee Rights Coalition

ACTION REPORT



25 26

The Nashville Hub provides events, coaching, and support to communities that are working to transform the K-12 experience to prepare all students for college, career, and life. Nashville Hub started in 2011 by providing opportunities for communities to visit Nashville and learn about the Academies of Nashville. The Hub now hosts a variety of events catered to the specific needs of Academies faculty and staff, and Hub consultants travel all over the country to facilitate trainings in different aspects of the Academy model.



**Scenes from the inaugural Academy Coach Institute
hosted by the Hub in fall 2025**

The Nashville Hub draws on the experience and expertise of practitioners that have been deeply involved in the visioning, implementation, and sustainability of the successful Academies of Nashville, Community Achieves, and more. These practitioners bring their experiences and lessons learned to the development and provision of impactful professional development and coaching.

**25-26
BY THE NUMBERS**

- Served **14 communities** across the U.S. through **30+ trainings**
- Created **2 new versions** of Freshman Seminar
- Held **3 new Academies events** in Nashville, serving **15 communities**

The 2025-2026 school year was a year of innovation for the Hub, with the creation and execution of 3 new events held in Nashville: the Academy Coach Institute, the Onboarding Academies Experience, and the Advanced Academies Experience. These events facilitated deeper connections and focus for communities both new and experienced in implementing the Academies model. The Hub also worked to completely update and launch a new Freshman Seminar package, including weekly and biweekly curricula versions for communities to choose.

Nashville Hub continues to amplify the excellence of the Academies of Nashville nationally, through events, consulting and products. The Hub co-hosts the annual Academies of Nashville Awards ceremony and is instrumental to the execution of the district's annual Career Exploration Fair.

The Hub is a designated Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL) Hub and participates with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the Association for Career & Technical Education (ACTE), and the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC).



**Scenes from the 2026
Academies of Nashville
Awards ceremony**



**Snapshots of Hub trainings held
in Dayton, OH (left) and
Hopkinsville, KY (right)**





Nashville Hub attends the 2025 Ford Next Generation Learning Leadership Council in Kansas City, MO

25-26 LEADERSHIP

Heather Chalos (President of Nashville Hub)
Morgan Tubbs (Manager of Nashville Hub)
Starr Herrman & Alison Colyar
(Co-Directors of Consulting for Nashville Hub)

ACTION REPORT

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COLLABORATIVE

25
26
—

The Out of School Time (OST) Collaborative continued to serve as a cross-sector network of Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and community partners working to strengthen access to high-quality out-of-school time programming for Nashville youth. Functioning as a community of practice, the Collaborative focused on building stronger coordination across organizations, addressing service and equity gaps, increasing provider capacity, and improving alignment between schools and OST partners.



During the 2025–2026 school year, the Collaborative shifted toward a focus on capacity-building. Meetings centered on key system-level topics including funding sustainability, program quality, curriculum development, partner coordination, transportation barriers, family engagement, and workforce challenges. The Collaborative intentionally created more opportunities for partners to share strategies, identify overlapping services, and collaborate around shared challenges rather than operating in isolation.



**Snapshots from
the fall 2025
collaborative meeting**

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COLLABORATIVE

25-26 OUTCOMES

KEY FINDINGS

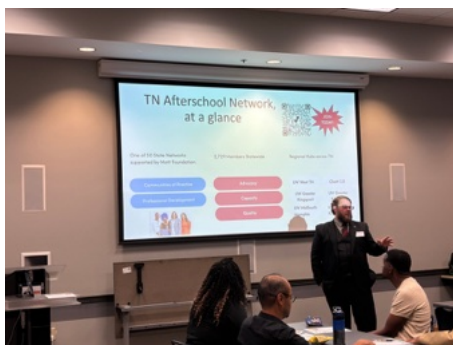
- OST providers are experiencing increasing financial and operational strain due to flat or reduced funding and the end of pandemic-era supports.
- Transportation and food access continue to be major barriers impacting youth participation in OST programming.
- Partners want stronger systems for collaboration, communication, and coordination across organizations and schools.
- Providers are seeking more support around nonprofit operations, fundraising, staffing, and organizational sustainability.

A major focus of the year involved helping providers navigate significant uncertainty across the OST landscape. Collaborative discussions highlighted concerns related to shrinking funding streams, the end of pandemic-era supports, staffing shortages, transportation barriers, food insecurity, and increasing operational pressures on youth-serving organizations. At the same time, partners identified opportunities for deeper collaboration, stronger advocacy, and more coordinated systems of support for youth and families.

The Collaborative also emphasized practical systems improvements and partner coordination. Discussions throughout the year reinforced the need for:

- Greater inclusion of OST providers within school-level planning and communication structures
- Improved consistency in partner and cluster meetings across schools
- Shared approaches to curriculum development and program quality
- Cross-organization collaboration to reduce duplication and improve service alignment
- Increased support around nonprofit leadership, fundraising, and organizational sustainability
- More intentional outreach to immigrant, refugee, and historically underserved families

The OST Collaborative additionally explored strategies for strengthening the youth workforce pipeline, including discussion of collaborative hiring approaches, workforce credentialing systems, and partnerships with employers, universities, and community organizations.



Brandon White, Director of Education for the United Way of Greater Nashville, gives a presentation on the Tennessee After School Network to the collaborative

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COLLABORATIVE

25-26 OUTCOMES

KEY FINDINGS

- Family engagement remains a major strength and opportunity area for OST programs.
- Providers identified growing need for inclusive programming strategies that better support youth with disabilities and exceptional needs.
- Workforce shortages remain a major challenge across the OST ecosystem.
- Participants emphasized the importance of youth-centered, relationship-driven, and culturally responsive programming.
- Collaboration, advocacy, and coordinated messaging were consistently identified as critical strategies for strengthening Nashville's OST ecosystem.

2025-2026 outcomes included:

- Facilitated "The State of OST in Nashville" panel discussion focused on funding shifts, emerging youth needs, provider sustainability, transportation equity, and legislative impacts affecting OST programming
- Elevated provider concerns related to transportation access, food insecurity, staffing shortages, and the loss of pandemic-era funding supports
- Strengthened conversations around cross-partner collaboration, asset mapping, and reducing duplication of services across schools and communities
- Provided training and shared learning opportunities related to OST curriculum selection, youth engagement, program design, and participant-centered approaches
- Increased focus on improving coordination between OST providers and schools, including stronger inclusion in family engagement planning, school meetings, and data-sharing conversations
- Identified opportunities for more collaborative approaches to workforce recruitment, including discussion of a citywide OST hiring fair
- Expanded conversations around inclusive programming, accessibility for youth with disabilities, and culturally responsive family engagement strategies
- Continued promoting networking, resource sharing, and cross-sector relationship building among OST providers and community partners

Students complete an art project through Backfield in Motion at Dupont Hadley Middle School



Students learn about reptiles through Moves and Grooves at JFK Middle School

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COLLABORATIVE

LEADERSHIP & ROSTER

25-26 LEADERSHIP

Tiffany E. Carter (MNPS)
Melissa Cornejo-Nell (MNPS)
Anna Harutyunyan (Nashville After Zone Alliance)

25-26 ALIGNMENT STAFF

Robert Robinson (Alignment Nashville)
Nathan Shulman (Alignment Nashville)

25-26 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Aspiring Youth Encouragement
Backfield in Motion
Be Natural Company
Belmont Fast Forward
Bethlehem Centers
Beyond the Natural Foundation
Blacks in Technology
Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee
Cafe Momentum
Catholic Charities of TN
CodeX Academy
Community Achieves
Conexion Americas
Corner to Corner
DYMOM in the Rough (Dynamic Young
Minorities of Nashville)
Elijah's Heart
Elmington Elevates Extended Care
Empowerment Inc.

Free Hearts
Girls Write Nashville
Global Outreach Developments Int'l
Harmony CORE-alition
Homework Help Online
Huggs
In Full Motion
Juvenile Court
Martha O'Bryan Center
Mayor's Office
Mentor A Kid
Midtown Fellowship
MNPS
Moves and Grooves
Nashville After Zone Alliance
Nashville Children's Theater
Nashville Gov
Nashville Public Library
Nations Ministry Center

Oasis Center
Park Community Center
Persist Nashville
Preston Taylor Ministries
Project for Neighborhood Care
Project Transformation
RocketTown
Salama Urban Ministries
Small World Yoga
Southern Word
The F.I.N.D. Design
Transformation Life Center
United Way of Greater Nashville
United Ways of Tennessee
YMCA of Middle Tennessee
Young Life
Youth Encouragement Services
Youth for Christ Nashville
YWCA of Nashville and Middle TN

ACTION REPORT

2026 POSITIVE SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

25
26

The 2026 Positive Schools Conference, a cornerstone event for Metro Nashville Public Schools educators and professionals, took place on July 16, 2026, at James Lawson High School. This year's conference drew in nearly 400 attendees, presenters, exhibitors, volunteers, and MNPS leadership.

The event kicked off with remarks from MNPS leadership, including Superintendent Dr. Adrienne Battle, and an awards ceremony recognizing excellence in positive schools development by both internal MNPS departments and community partners. Conference attendees then had the opportunity to visit exhibitors and learn more about their resources and offerings; we were thrilled to have a record number of sponsors and exhibitors this year. Participants could also visit the Mindfulness Room to practice their own self care throughout the day.



2026 Positive Schools Conference Award winners recognized during the opening session



A conference attendee chats with an exhibitor

2026 POSITIVE SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

**25-26
OUTCOMES**

KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly 400 MNPS staff & contractors, presenters, exhibitors, volunteers, and MNPS leadership were in attendance.
- Providing this level of professional development for that many educators through a traditional conference model could cost the district upwards of \$500,000 in registration, travel, and logistics. But by aligning our local resources and lifting up our own expertise, we've created a high-impact, accessible experience that's customized for our schools and students.

Attendees then participated in a variety of workshops and breakout sessions, all aimed at building and enhancing a positive school culture in each school building across the district. The diverse range of topics ensured that there was something valuable for everyone, from teachers and administrators to counselors and support staff. The conference day wrapped up with a unique closing session that included:

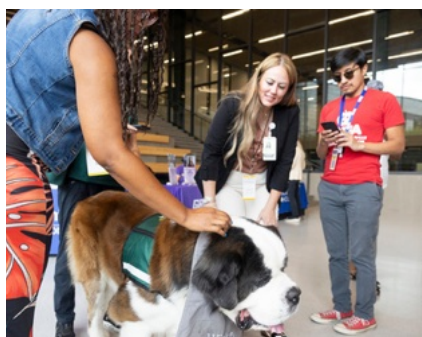
- Performances from the James Lawson High School & Cane Ridge High School drumlines
- Live performance of the MNPS anthem "Every Student Known," created by MNPS students & music educators
- A showcase of the work students have been doing with Lumi, an AI-powered storytelling tool
- A special visit by Lumi Story's founder, former professional football player and activist Colin Kaepernick

2026 Positive Schools Conference award winners were:

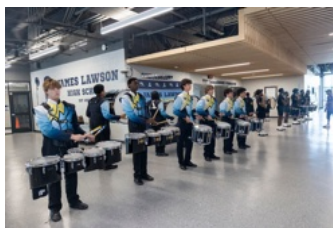
- Leading with Support: MNPS Department Awards for Positive Schools = Special Populations & Exceptional Education
- Community Impact Awards: Driving Positive School Success = My Brother's Keeper and Dr. Deandrea Witherspoon Nash



Snapshots of presentations held throughout the conference day



Conference attendees enjoy a visit from furry friends courtesy of HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response



Scenes from the conference closing session

2026 POSITIVE SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

PLANNING TEAM & SPONSORS

25-26 PLANNING TEAM

Beth Schroeder (MNPS)	Leslie Bell (MNPS)
Crystal Johnson-Terrell (MNPS)	Rodger Dinwiddie (STARS Nashville)
Priscilla Cole (MNPS)	Kathy Gracey (Vanderbilt University Medical Center)
Inta Sanford (MNPS)	Tracy Glascoe (Vanderbilt Behavioral Health)
Simyka Carlton (MNPS)	

25-26 ALIGNMENT STAFF

Heather Chalos (Alignment Nashville)
Morgan Tubbs (Alignment Nashville)

2026 SPONSORS

FirstBank

STARS Nashville

AVID

Ingram Content Group Destination Knowledge Facing History & Ourselves

Vanderbilt Health Tristar Centennial Parthenon Pavilion Grand Canyon University
Vanderbilt University Peabody College Trustpoint Hospital

Mental Health Cooperative
Metro Nashville Education
Association
QuaverEd
ARCH Academy

Centerstone
CoParenting International
EmbraceU
Girls Write Nashville
Just Us at Oasis Center

Move this World at
Riverside Insights
Stronger Than My Father
Teacher Created Materials
UTK College of Social Work

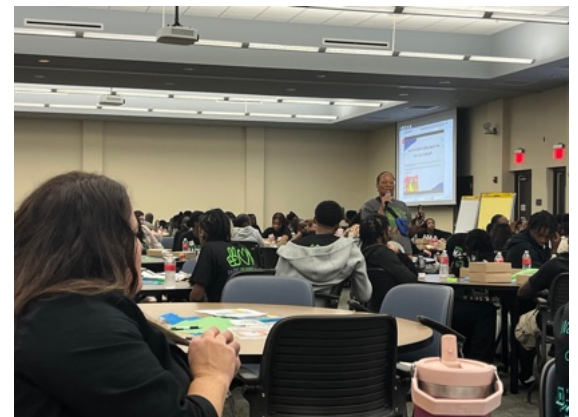
ACTION REPORT

YOUTH HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

25
26
—

The Youth Health Collaborative (YHC) brings together Metro Nashville Public Schools, Metro Public Health Department, nonprofit organizations, and community partners to improve the health and well-being of Nashville's children and youth. The Collaborative strives to share resources and to support collaborations to help students access health and well-being services, as well as promote stronger coordination between schools and community partners to support improved health and academic outcomes.

As the district's School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), the Collaborative serves as a forum for strengthening partnerships, sharing best practices, and identifying opportunities to better align resources in support of student success. During the 2025–2026 school year, the Collaborative focused on strengthening authentic school-community partnerships, supporting implementation of the Student Voice Toolkit, advancing adult wellness, and exploring how data can be used to better align resources with student and family needs.



YHC Co-Chair Shannon Key speaks to students at the second annual district-wide Youth Mental Health Summit in fall 2025

YOUTH HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

25-26 OUTCOMES

KEY FINDINGS

- Student voice is most impactful when it is intentionally embedded into planning, programming, and decision-making rather than treated as a standalone activity.
- Supporting adult wellness requires organizational commitment, leadership, and systems that promote collective care, not solely individual self-care.
- Practical tools and shared resources help schools and community organizations implement new strategies more consistently.
- Existing district and community data provide valuable insight into student needs and opportunities for stronger resource alignment.

A major focus of the year centered on strengthening relationships between schools and community organizations to improve coordination and better connect students and families with available supports. Throughout the year, partners shared emerging needs, highlighted promising practices, and explored opportunities to improve communication, reduce duplication of services, and better align community resources with school priorities. Conversations consistently reinforced that meaningful improvements in student health and well-being require coordinated action across schools, healthcare providers, behavioral health organizations, nonprofits, and public agencies rather than isolated efforts.

The Collaborative also prioritized elevating student voice as an important component of healthy school communities. Building on the Youth Mental Health Summit hosted in the fall and the development of the Student Voice Toolkit, members explored practical ways to incorporate student perspectives into school improvement efforts, youth-serving programs, and mental health supports. Partners also identified strategies for creating more authentic opportunities for students to provide feedback, influence decisions, and help shape the programs designed to support them. Throughout the spring, members were encouraged to pilot toolkit strategies within their own organizations and share lessons learned to strengthen future implementation.

Adult wellness was another significant priority throughout the year. Recognizing that educators and youth-serving professionals are better equipped to support students when they feel healthy, supported, and connected, the Collaborative engaged in conversations around how we could shift the adult wellness conversation beyond individual self-care to explore organizational practices that promote collective care and sustainable workplace cultures. These discussions resulted in the development of shared Adult Wellness Values and a draft Adult Wellness Resource Guide designed to help schools and community organizations better support staff through practical resources, shared language, and leadership practices that embed wellness into everyday work.

YOUTH HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

25-26 OUTCOMES

KEY FINDINGS

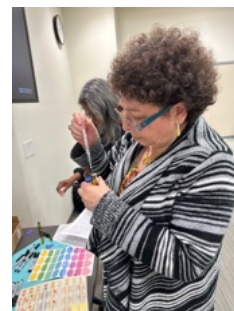
- Community organizations benefit from clearer pathways for understanding school priorities and connecting services to identified needs.
- Building on existing systems and partnerships is often more effective than creating new initiatives.
- Ongoing collaboration and shared learning strengthen relationships, improve communication, and increase collective capacity to support student health and well-being.

The Collaborative also expanded its focus on data-informed decision-making by examining how existing data sources, including the Collaborative Referral System, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Panorama surveys, and other district and community data could be used to better understand student needs, identify service gaps, and strengthen partnerships. Rather than creating new systems, partners emphasized improving communication, building upon existing structures, and developing practical approaches that make it easier to connect students and families with the services they need. These conversations laid the foundation for future work focused on resource alignment, coordinated referrals, and stronger collaboration across organizations.

Overall, through shared learning, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving, partners developed practical tools, strengthened relationships, and identified opportunities to better coordinate supports for students, families, and educators.



YHC member Calley Crews presenting at the 2026 Positive Schools Conference



Snapshots from the final YHC meeting of the 25-26 school year, when YHC members participated in an adult wellness activity making essential oil rollers to take home

YOUTH HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

LEADERSHIP & ROSTER

25-26 LEADERSHIP

Shannon Key (MNPS)
Ashford Hughes, Sr. (MNPS)
Yolonda Radford (Metro Public Health Department)

25-26 ALIGNMENT STAFF

Robert Robinson (Alignment Nashville)
Morgan Tubbs (Alignment Nashville)
Nathan Shulman (Alignment Nashville)

25-26 ROSTER

Jonna Alexander (Trustpoint Hospital)
Kyle Alexander (MNPS)
Paul Augustyniak (American Foundation
for Suicide Prevention-TN Chapter)
Nicole Boyle (MNPS)
Carol Brown (MNPS)
Simyka Carlton (MNPS)
Nautica Caswell (MPHD)
Sarah Cermak (MNPS)
Amie Coleman, (MNPS)
Calley Crews (Caron Treatment Centers)
Mary Crnabori (MNPS)
Danielle Duke (MPHD)
Brittany Edmondson (MNPS)
Edwina Freeman (DYMON)
Tracy Glascoe (Vanderbilt Behavioral
Health)

Melissa Gordon (MNPS)
Kathy Gracey (Vanderbilt)
Kristen Hammond (Mental Health
Cooperative)
Maria Heerdt (MNPS)
Terrence Henderson (MPHD)
Shamika Higgins (Metro Action
Commission)
Kay Higgs (STARS Nashville)
Johnsie Holt (MNPS)
Charity Ingersoll (Vanderbilt
University Medical Center)
Kanesha Jones (MNPS)
Ashley King (Hope Clinic for Women)
Michael Kirshner (TN Voices)
Amy Kraus (MNPS)

Vanessa Lazon (MNPS)
Hailey Nutter (The Renfrew Center)
Kate Presnell (Goodwill Industries of
Middle Tennessee)
Riki Rattner (Be Well)
Michaya Reeves (MPHD)
Catherine Sakarapanee (MNPS)
Whitney Salyer (Centerstone)
Laseanda Sanders (MNPS)
Beth Schroeder (MNPS)
Whitney Slovick (MNPS)
Jen Starsinic, Girls Write Nashville
Ariell Tillman (MNPS)
Amara Townes (ARCH Academy)
Sheldon Walker (MPHD)
Jace Wilder (NAMI Davidson County)
Joseph Wilson (STARS Nashville)