

ACTION REPORT

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS A-TEAM

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The College Access & Success A-Team, established in fall 2023, has dedicated the year to enhancing college access and ensuring the success of students through collaborative efforts and strategic planning.

The team identified three core priorities to guide its 2024–2025 workplan: (1) expanding access and outreach, (2) increasing marketing and awareness, and (3) laying the groundwork for a case management system. Specific strategies included:

- Planning and launching a series of FAFSA workshops to be held from December through July, supported by a targeted media campaign and community-based partnerships
 - Designing outreach efforts that better engaged working families, undocumented students, and rising college freshmen through weekend events, virtual supports, and multilingual materials.
 - Engaging AON student ambassadors to co-develop school-based communications plans around postsecondary transitions, with training provided to high school staff.
- Beginning the development of a Best Practices Guidebook to support collaboration between MNPS schools and community-based organizations, with a focus on role clarity, communication protocols, and shared goal setting.



Photo from the first College Access & Success A-Team meeting of the school year

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS A-TEAM

**24-25
OUTCOMES**

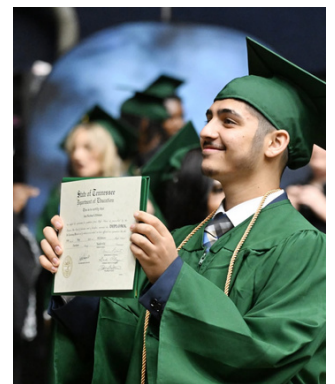
KEY FINDINGS

- National shifts in federal priorities impacted the local college access landscape.
- The Best Practices Guidebook, developed to support school-community partnerships, emphasized role clarity, shared goals, and onboarding protocols.
- A panel with Overton's Advising Team Identified best practices for College Access partners, highlighting the importance of strong organizational structure, administrative support, and collaboration with community partners.
- MNPS's decision to restructure to better support and align college access efforts was due in part to conversations held in College Access & Success meetings.

National shifts in federal priorities impacted the local college access landscape, as demonstrated by the U.S. Department of Education's decision not to award Round 2 funding for the FAFSA Support Strategy—despite the team's collaborative effort to support a \$300,000 grant proposal with TNCASN, aimed at expanding FAFSA completion through partners like Oasis Center, Persist Nashville, and Martha O'Bryan Center.

College Access & Success outcomes include:

- Strategized a citywide FAFSA workshop series with a goal of 75% completion among attendees, supported by centralized outreach (texts, newsletters, shared calendars) and a \$300,000 federal grant proposal to expand advising via Oasis Center, Persist Nashville, and Martha O'Bryan, with Alignment Nashville leading communications
- Strengthened partnerships by hosting a best practices panel with John Overton High School's College and Career Advising Team to highlight collaborative efforts between the school and community partners to support college and career readiness among high school students
- Developed a best practice guidebook to formalize roles, responsibilities, MOUs, onboarding materials, and a shared vision for consistent school-community collaboration



Snapshots from 2025 MNPS high school graduation ceremonies,
courtesy of MNPS Communications

**COLLEGE ACCESS &
SUCCESS A-TEAM**

**LEADERSHIP &
ROSTER**

24-25 LEADERSHIP

Sanjana Ballal-Link (MNPS)
Bob Obrohta (Tennessee College Access & Success Network)

24-25 ALIGNMENT STAFF

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

24-25 ROSTER

Sigfredo Amaya (Conexión Américas)
Nekesha Burnette (MNPS- Antioch HS)
Morgan Campey (Martha O'Bryan Center)
Jaclyn Coleman (MNPS- Pearl-Cohn HS)
Melissa Cornejo-Nell (MNPS)
Dr. Megan Cusson-Lark (MNPS)
Brenda Diaz (MNPS- Big Picture HS)
Kevin Edwards (MNPS)
Lee Gray (Oasis Center)
Dr. Joe Gordon (MNPS)
John Paul Gray (MNPS GEAR UP- Gaining Early
Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate
Programs)
Karina Gutierrez-Molina (YMCA)

Laura Herrell (Nashville Area Chamber of
Commerce)
Jackie Herrera (Oasis Center)
Jennifer Hill (Persist Nashville)
Dr. Joseph Kelly (MNPS AVID)
Jozef Lukey (Belmont University Bell Tower
Program)
Lanedria Marshall (MNPS- Maplewood HS)
Laura Moran (Nashville State Community
College)
Sherica Clark Nelms (Martha O'Bryan Center)
Nicole Newman (MNPS- Whites Creek HS)
Benjamin Smith (Southern Word)
Beth Wilson (MNPS- Overton HS)