

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)