

ACTION REPORT

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS A-TEAM

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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.

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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

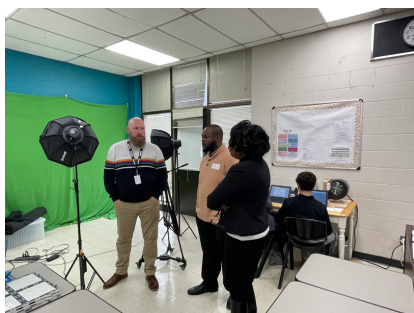
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25-26 OUTCOMES

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

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