

Forward **FOCUS**

A News Bulletin For Employees Of Metro Nashville Public Schools

IN THIS ISSUE: CENTRAL OFFICE MENTORING • SCHOOL CHOICE APPLICATIONS • LEADING WITH PURPOSE



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Shawn Joseph

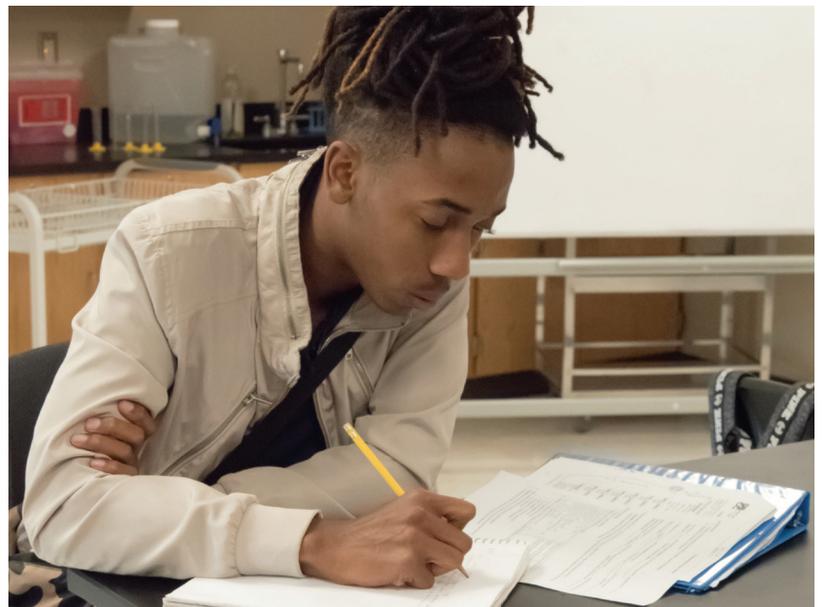
By choosing to work at MNPS, each of us is contributing to the growth, development and achievement of Nashville's children and their future opportunities. What you do, what we do together counts. The board, my leadership team, and I are working to provide you with a clear vision, mission, set of values and Key Performance Indicators. In addition, we are working to identify those strategies and actions that will yield the greatest impact for our students.

Streamlining what we do for children is critically important at this point in MNPS's evolution. Not all of our children have been developing, growing and achieving as well as they can or should. We need to focus our work on results in ways we haven't before. This week's Forward Focus highlights some changes we are making to assessments based on teacher feedback and leaders' analysis of best practices.

I'm not talking about traditional accountability measures; I'm talking about monitoring students' growth and intervening and providing targeted instruction and supports in real time and in strategic, systematic and consistent ways—all based on the individual student and his/her needs.

I'm aware that some of what you are being asked to do not only feels but actually is different. Our focal point is children and their future life success. It is critical that we look at everything strategically and with urgency. Revisiting our assessments is one strategy for helping us be both smarter and faster in supporting children.

FEATURE STORY



THE FUTURE OF ASSESSMENTS, PART II

The impact of your feedback

In last week's Forward Focus, we looked at data gathered from the teacher survey regarding assessments. The survey, completed in August, gave teachers an opportunity to provide feedback on national, state and district assessments. The insights from the survey are invaluable and are used every day to guide future plans and immediate adjustments to Metro Schools' testing schedule.

On Oct. 12, principals and administrators gathered for the

Administrators and Supervisory Meeting. A main focus of the meeting was to review the results from the survey and to discuss the future of assessments within the district. Dr. Monique Felder, Chief Academic Officer, kicked off the session by explaining the importance of assessments.

"Assessments affect decision making across all areas of education, and they inspire us to ask the hard questions about learning and teaching," she said.

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ASSESSMENT CHANGES

The charts below describe the year-over-year assessment changes at the local, state and federal levels. Two district assessments were eliminated, two national assessments were eliminated, and two national assessments were shortened. Additionally, the administration of the district's winter and spring benchmark assessments is now optional.

2015–2016 MNPS ASSESSMENTS	2016–2017 MNPS ASSESSMENTS
<p>NATIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore • PLAN • ACT • NAEP <p>STATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCAP/TNReady • End of Course Exams • TCAP Alt-Portfolio • WIDA Access <p>DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text Level Assessments • Benchmark Assessments • MIST Practice Tests • RTII Universal Screener • Digital Literacy Assessment 	<p>NATIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore • PLAN • ACT • NAEP • NWEA MAP <p>STATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCAP/TNReady (<i>shorter</i>) • End of Course Exams (<i>shorter</i>) • TCAP Alt-Portfolio • WIDA Access • Kindergarten Entry Inventory <p>DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text Level Assessments • Benchmark Assessments (<i>shorter</i>) • MIST Practice Tests • RTII Universal Screener • Digital Literacy Assessment

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In this transition year district leadership has made adjustments to the testing regiment as teachers and leadership work together to find the most effective balance of instructional time, assessments and assessment data.

The district eliminated two district assessments this year, and the state also made changes with the removal of two national assessments and the shortening of two state assessments. Additionally, the administration of the district's winter and spring benchmark assessments is now optional. District leadership is currently researching alternative assessments for the future, like the NWEA's MAP-R assessment, a formative assessment that adjusts to each child's level and gives teachers a more detailed report of individual proficiency and growth. Look for more information about future assessments in the coming months.

The district is also committed to helping principals better understand and use their school's benchmark assessment results. Earlier this month, the Curriculum and Instruction office, in partnership with the Research, Assessment, and Evaluation office, hosted sessions for principals to support them in accessing, interpreting, and using their assessment results to build instruction and increase student learning.

Because of your feedback on the survey, leadership can begin to better understand the impact of each assessment and continue to make impactful changes and ensure our students excel at the highest levels.

MNPS LAUNCHES CENTRAL OFFICE MENTORING INITIATIVE



We are excited to announce that Metro Schools is launching the MNPS Central Office Mentoring Pilot Initiative! The purpose of this program is to provide one-on-one mentoring/tutoring to second, fifth and ninth grade students in priority schools. Those three grade-levels were chosen intentionally as each are identified as important times in a child's life both academically and emotionally.

With this new initiative, district leadership will be able to connect with students who could benefit from having an adult mentor in their life. Staff members who are not in schools on a daily basis will now have the opportunity to be in

the classroom more regularly and remained focus on our students—an experience that is invaluable to their own district staff roles.

The mentoring initiative will add almost 200 volunteers to our schools in need. District leaders with the title of coordinator/manager and higher will be required to participate and will be assigned to a school to provide literacy support in the reading clinics or to mentor students who might be struggling academically or with socio-emotional issues.

This initiative will officially kick off on Oct. 25. Be on the lookout for more information for principals and school counselors.



LEADING WITH PURPOSE

Dr. James Bailey teaches students sportmanship and integrity on and off the field

When Dr. James Bailey is asked why he enjoys being the principal of Whites Creek High School and the pastor of Sweet Savior Church, his answer is the same: giving people the help and hope to reach their goals. He has provided Whites Creek with that help and hope for five years now after serving with Metro Schools as a substitute, a teacher, a dean and an assistant principal. Since becoming the principal at Whites Creek, graduation rates have gone from 88 percent to almost 92 percent, and ACT scores have also increased. Among other factors, Bailey attributes the positive numbers to having the right staff members in place and the revitalization of school spirit.

“Students want to do well – to be proud of their school and selves,” said Bailey, “I want them to put on that jersey or school shirt and represent Whites Creek with respect.”

Bailey teaches that respect in a classroom setting and on the athletic field. This month, Bailey was recognized as the A.F. Bridges Principal of the Year for inspiring integrity, ethics, citizenship and sportsmanship.

“I tell my coaches and students to give it our all on the field and in the classroom, and if we lose, we lose with dignity and pride,” said Bailey.

Whites Creek is already off to a great start, but this year Bailey hopes to promote ACT prep, build capacity with his staff, continue to push rigor in all subjects and encourage teacher and student leadership. The creek continues to rise with Dr. Bailey’s positive support and guidance.

SCHOOL CHOICE APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE OCTOBER 31

An overview of this year’s changes

Next week marks the start of School Choice season. Walk-Through Tuesdays are already in full swing and School Choice applications will be sent home and made available online Oct. 31. Although most School Choice information is for our external audience, it is important for employees to be familiar with the changes for this year and know the key deadlines to keep in mind.

The biggest changes this year involve high school choice. Eighth grade students are no longer required to apply for their zoned school and all students applying to high school will no longer apply for academy choices. High school students will select their academy with their high school counselor after their school is chosen. High School 101 as a course will no longer be offered and students will work collaboratively exploring options with their counselors. The decision was made to provide schools with other strategies to inform middle schoolers of the options at all high schools, not just at the Academies.

Also, Meigs (5–8), MLK (7–12) and Hume Fogg (9–12) still have academic entrance requirements based on standardized test scores



and grades, but because there were no TCAP standardized tests given in the 2015-16 school year, the testing requirement has also been altered for the 2016 application period. Parents will be given a report indicating whether their child met the new testing requirement. This report will include all relevant test scores. Those specific academic requirements can be found at www.mnps.org/blog/schoolchoiceinfo, along with other handouts and informational materials to share with your families.

Additional changes to the 2016 School Choice process: Alex Green, Cockrill, Shwab and Whitsitt Elementary Schools will be added to the application. Gower Elementary School will be removed from the application due to limited capacity.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

BOARD RETREAT REVIEW

On Friday, Oct. 14, the Board and Dr. Joseph’s senior leadership team wrapped up their third retreat over the last four months.

This retreat renewed the Board’s collective commitment to large-scale improvement of both the district and itself with unanimous agreement to move in a common direction to:

- build a new and better Board;
- professionalize its operations, functions and governance; and
- streamline its committee structure.

Together with the senior leadership team, the Board worked to develop a mission, vision and core value statements as well as establish key performance indicators needed to report student data.

In the coming weeks, the board, Dr. Joseph and the senior leadership team will continue to establish implementation timelines for creating effective and transparent methods for evaluating, monitoring and sharing student achievements, operational effectiveness, board governance and Dr. Joseph’s successes.



CALENDAR

OCTOBER 10-27

Teacher Voice Sessions
4:30-5:30 p.m.

Locations vary. See complete schedule at mnps.org.

OCTOBER 17-DECEMBER 15

Register for the MNPS Family Engagement Summit (Event on Jan. 4)

OCTOBER 25

Board of Education Meeting
5 p.m.

*Central Office Board Room
2601 Bransford Ave, Nashville, TN 37204*

OCTOBER 31

Optional Schools Application available online and sent home with students.

NOVEMBER 1

Start of Annual Enrollment (Certificated Staff)

NOVEMBER 3

Eighth Grade High School Choice Day

NOVEMBER 4

Job Fair: Substitutes, Para Professionals and Central Office Staff
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

*West End Middle Prep
3529 West End Ave, Nashville, TN 37205*

NOVEMBER 4&5

JumpStart on Board Candidacy
6-9 p.m. and 8:30 a.m.-4:40 p.m.

*Metropolitan Nashville Education Association
531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211*



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To submit to Forward Focus use this online form:
<http://bit.ly/2acUpTv>

The deadline for submissions is the end of the business day on Tuesday. Submissions received by this deadline will be reviewed for the following week's edition.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Email communications@mnps.org.



NEWS BRIEFS

Classroom Mini-Grants Now Open to all Tennessee Teachers

The 2016 TSIN Mini-grant Program, sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority, is designed to fund STEM learning projects in Tennessee classrooms and schools. A pool of \$60,000 is available due to a gift to the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network to fund these classroom grants. Grant funding may be used to purchase STEM instructional materials and equipment, which must then become local school resources. *Apply Here:* <http://thetsin.org/about/minigrants>. The deadline to apply is Nov. 11.

Support Be About Change to Support our Students

Be About Change team members will be running in the Tennessee Tough Mudder on Oct. 30 as part of a fundraising effort for scholarships for Nashville students. You are invited to help support local students by making a donation at beaboutchange.org/fundraiser-gift, where you also have a chance at winning one of three \$50 Visa gift cards, provided by

one of *Be About Change's* sponsors. *Be About Change* provides higher education scholarships to students from low-income households and promotes expression through writing.

NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing

Tennessee Tech, Academic Alliance and Affiliate partner of NCWIT, is rewarding young women with admirable achievements and aspirations in computing and technology with the Award for Aspirations in Computing. Applicants must be Tennessee residents in grades 9-12, have an aptitude and interest in IT/computing, a good academic history and an interest in post-secondary education.

Each national winner receives \$500, a laptop, a trip to attend the Bank of America Technology Showcase and Awards Ceremony in Charlotte, NC, and an engraved national award. Online applications must be submitted by Nov. 7. *Apply at* www.aspirations.org.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

AWARDS

This year Metro Schools had seven employees earn the title of Nashville Public Television (NPT) American Graduate Champions. An American Graduate Champion commits their time, skills and resources to make sure that young people succeed. He or she is an individual who plays an active role in improving educational outcomes for students.

Congratulations to the recipients:

Dr. Deborah Smith
(Girls and STEM)

Bill Warren
(Executive Lead Principal)

Lorraine Stallworth
(Coordinator-Restorative Justice)

Ron Woodard
(Former Principal)

Ruben DePena
(EL Family and Community Liaison)

Nasreen Kuvly
(Parent Outreach Translator)

Michael Beno
(EL Extended Day Program)

Dr. James Bailey was awarded the A.F. Bridges Principal of the Year Award by the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association. Mr. A.F. Bridges, the award's namesake, was a person of high principles who displayed firmness and fairness, as well as the high ideals of ethics and integrity, as he and many other school people established the foundation of TSSAA across Tennessee.

Have a staff recognition or In Memoriam to share with others in the district? Please submit to <http://bit.ly/2acUpTv>.