

# Forward **FOCUS**

*A News Bulletin for Employees of Metro Nashville Public Schools*

**IN THIS ISSUE:** BULLYING PREVENTION • CONFERENCE PRESENTERS • TEMPORARY JOB REVEALS NEW CAREER PLAN



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Dr. Shawn Joseph*

We are busily working on our strategic plan and next year's budget. It is clear there are great needs within our district. There are also a multitude of opportunities to take our work to new levels of excellence.

Dr. Betty Morgan, former national superintendent of the year, and David Williams, Vice Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, will be presenting the transition team report to the Board of Education Feb. 7. This is a key milestone because it will provide me with short- and long-term recommendations in the areas of student achievement, school choice, communications/community involvement, and human resources. As we build our strategic plan, I will be utilizing their extensive findings to prioritize our work. We will not be able to address everything in one year, but will work toward continuous improvement over time.

We will be looking closely at our budgets to reprioritize funds to address systemic challenges. Working with principals, we have also begun to discuss changes in the school based budgeting process that will standardize key positions within schools. We will do our best to be transparent and communicative as we begin to make changes that we believe will result in improved outcomes for students.

I encourage you to stay engaged through the strategic planning process and provide us feedback when it is requested. Together, we are going to dramatically improve student achievement. Thank you for your all of your efforts.

## FEATURE STORY



## MNPS ROLLS OUT NEW ASSESSMENT

Beginning this week, the district will administer phase one of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, a new-to-MNPS assessment that provides individualized and reliable information teachers need to plan data-driven instruction.

### HOW DOES THE ASSESSMENT WORK?

The MAP test is designed to accurately measure a child's academic level. As students complete the assessment, they will encounter a variety of questions that challenge them at their unique level. If students answer a question correctly, a more

challenging question follows; if they answer incorrectly, they receive a less challenging question. This pattern continues as the assessment adapts to determine the student's true learning abilities. The MAP assessment does not directly contribute positively or negatively to a student's grade in class.

After completing the first assessment, students fall into certain categories based on their Ready for Instruction Today (RIT) score. From a RIT score,

*continued on page 2*

## 2016-17 READING ONLY

(NWEA MAP-R) Grades 2-8



**JANUARY 23<sup>RD</sup> - FEBRUARY 17<sup>TH</sup>**  
Administration I

**MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> - MAY 25<sup>TH</sup>**  
Administration II

continued from page 1

teachers can understand what individualized skills and concepts students still need to master and can better understand and plan for what they need to teach next.

### WHY THE MAP ASSESSMENT?

The MAP assessment is unique in that it will help teachers create differentiated curriculum tailored to each student's learning level. This will give teachers another resource to use as they work to diversify student supports.

Once teachers are empowered with their students' RIT score, they can use this information to develop strong planning processes and inform data-driven and differentiated instruction. Teachers can develop a strategy that will help students feel supported in their weaknesses while building on their strengths.

Teachers can share RIT scores with other teachers, students and parents and can partner with them to develop interventions, expectations and goals. Students can be given goals or they can set their own goals to work to achieve for the next test, such as a higher RIT score.

## RESOURCES

For help administering the MAP assessment, you can review these training documents and videos. If you need additional assistance, contact Jody McClarey ([Jody.McClarey@mnps.org](mailto:Jody.McClarey@mnps.org)).

1 PROCTOR TIPS AND TROUBLESHOOTING PRINTABLE GUIDE: <http://bit.ly/2gVQDCy>

2 TESTING OVERVIEW AND BEST PRACTICES VIDEO: <http://bit.ly/2jRziLx>

3 ACCOMMODATIONS INTERACTIVE TEXT: <http://bit.ly/2jg63yU>

4 TESTING DEMONSTRATION VIDEO: <http://bit.ly/2iJKsCA>

## RECOGNIZING & PREVENTING BULLYING IN MNPS

Bullying and harassment is prevalent across the country both in school hallways and in the digital sphere.

To prevent bullying in any situation, teachers and other school staff must be aware of warning signs and MNPS policies when action is necessary. It is equally important to implement prevention steps at the school-level, including anti-bullying training and the practice of Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

Bullying is defined below as an action that:

*Is intended to cause or actually causes the person to suffer harm or serious emotional distress; exploits an imbalance in power between the person engaging in the act or conduct and the person who is the subject of the act or conduct; poses a threat of immediate harm or actually inflicts harm to another person or to the property of another person; places the person in reasonable fear of harm or serious emotional distress; or creates an environment which is hostile to a pupil by interfering*

*with the education of the pupil and/or disrupts the educational environment.*

*(See more in Policy SP 6.110.)*

The potential long- and short-term effects of bullying are numerous and include lowered academic achievement, increased anxiety, absenteeism, depression, deterioration in physical health and many more negative outcomes.

In an attempt to prevent bullying and harassment, schools should implement SEL curriculum. By integrating SEL, students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to understand and manage emotions, set positive goals, be empathetic, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. Using SEL in your school can help lower the rates of bullying and create a positive and encouraging atmosphere for learning. This year, SEL will be incorporated into TEAM evaluations so teachers and administrators make this learning technique a priority.

### NATIONAL PREVALENCE OF BULLYING

National Surveys show bullying behavior is a significant problem that affects a large number of youth



**7-15%**

OF STUDENTS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY SCHOOL-BASED BULLYING



**18-31%**

OF STUDENTS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY CYBER BULLYING

### BULLYING IN MNPS

First semester bullying and harassment incident comparison

**552**

TOTAL INCIDENTS IN THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2015-16

**507**

TOTAL INCIDENTS IN THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2016-17



Dr. Margie Johnson, Business Intel Coordinator

## MNPS STAFF PRESENT AT NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Dr. Margie Johnson, Business Intel Coordinator, represented Metro Schools by presenting at the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Innovation (ICSEI) Conference in Ottawa, Canada on January 8 and 9. ICSEI focuses on making schools around the world excellent and equitable. ICSEI conferences attract people from more than 50 countries and have been held across the globe on every continent.

At the conference, Dr. Johnson presented on the Data-Informed Decision Making Ecosystem and the Regional Educational Library Appalachia (REL AP) partnership and how it develops a culture and common language for collaborative inquiry. Metro Schools' partnership with REL AP has been a three-year journey building middle school educators' capacities to engage in collaborative inquiry to support student success. She also held a joint workshop session with Dr. Vicky Smith from Austin Peay State University, on how educators can use research that demonstrates the positive effect collaboration has on student success.

Representatives from MNPS also had the opportunity to present the REL AP findings at the Learning Forward conference in early December in their presentation, "Leveraging Collaboration for Supporting Student Achievement." Along with Johnson, other MNPS participants/presenters were Whitney Akin, Dr. Erin Anderson, Dr. Shelly Dunaway, Dr. Craig Hammond and Dr. Mary Laurens Seely.

Visit the MNPS Collaborative Inquiry toolkit page to learn more about the work that was presented: [www.mnpscollaboration.org](http://www.mnpscollaboration.org).

## EDUCATOR MAKES KINDNESS & RESPECT THE NORM

*SEL intertwines with Robinson's daily curriculum*

By the time Heather Robinson ended her junior year at Yale University, she thought she knew where she would end up—with a career in evolutionary psychology. At the time, she had already completed many class hours, in-field work studying monkeys and had plans for a trip abroad to conduct research on dolphins. Before her journey overseas, she took a temporary job as a substitute to save up for her trip. What started as a means to an end turned into an experience that changed her life's trajectory. Robinson realized that however interesting her evolution studies were, her most challenging role and life's purpose would be her career as a teacher.

"Unexpectedly, I discovered a career that was so interesting and challenging to me—teaching called upon all of my talents," Robinson said.

From that point she worked to prepare for a classroom through a Master's in Education at Vanderbilt. Now, Robinson teaches fifth grade at Bellevue Middle Prep—an integral age where a student's own personal evolution is at stake. Robinson has been praised, among other things, for her incorporation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) practices into her curriculum. Her SEL practices are the base of her academic planning—consistently building her lessons around teaching students to respect and trust each other. Robinson knows that when she gets students writing and discussing SEL every day, it becomes their common language. Thinking of others and being respectful has become her classroom norm, making a bully the odd man out.

"In my class, students are not just students, but instead are philosophers, visionaries and activists," Robinson said. "I try to show them that their actions as good, kind people have a real and important purpose to the world."

Robinson involves students in real-world projects like writing to local



*"In my class, students are not just students, but instead are philosophers, visionaries and activists. I try to show them that their actions as good, kind people have a real and important purpose to the world."*

**Heather Robinson**  
FIFTH GRADE TEACHER AT  
BELLEVUE MIDDLE PREP

government officials about beginning recycling or anti-bullying programs, or writing speeches as modern-day abolitionists. Robinson has become an example to others in the district and hopes each year to send her students on as more empathetic and kind human beings as she leads other educators to do the same.

Robinson welcomes employees who want to learn more to email her at [Heather.Robinson@mnps.org](mailto:Heather.Robinson@mnps.org).



## CALENDAR

### JANUARY 24

Board of Education Meeting  
5 p.m.  
Central Office Board Room  
2601 Bransford Ave.

### JANUARY 26

Coffee ShopTalk: Nashville Reads Discussion  
6–7 p.m.  
Bongo Java East Nashville, 107 S. 11th  
Street, Nashville, TN 37206

### JANUARY 31

A Seat at the Table: Minority Civic  
Leadership Development Workshop  
<http://bit.ly/2k4MXzE>  
6–8 p.m.  
Urban League of Middle Tennessee  
50 Vantage Way, Suite 201  
Nashville, TN 37228

### FEBRUARY 6-10

National School Counseling Week  
<http://bit.ly/1KnNCOK>

### FEBRUARY 7

Board of Education Meeting  
5 p.m.  
Central Office Board Room  
2601 Bransford Ave.

### FEBRUARY 10

School Choice Selection Day

### FEBRUARY 24

Albert Lee Wright Jr. Memorial  
Migrant Scholarship  
[www.nasdme.org/al-wright-scholarship](http://www.nasdme.org/al-wright-scholarship)



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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](mailto:communications@mnps.org).

## NEWS BRIEFS

### *TWISTER Conference*

Early Bird Registration has started  
now through Jan. 29 for the TWISTER  
(Tennessee Women in Science,  
Technology, Engineering & Research)  
Conference—a daylong professional  
conference for high school girls,  
presented by women working in  
STEM professions. Each presenter  
will share details about her career,  
answer questions, provide guidance  
on educational pathways and share  
stories of daily life in the workplace.  
Participants attend four, 55-minute  
sessions that explore a variety of  
STEM topics.

#### Learn more:

[www.adventuresci.org/twister](http://www.adventuresci.org/twister)

**WHEN:** Sat. Feb. 11, 8 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Adventure Science  
Center, 800 Fort Negley Blvd  
Nashville, TN 37203

### *ACT & SAT to Provide Accommodations for English Learners*

Both ACT, Inc. and the College  
Board recently announced that  
they will begin offering test  
accommodations to English learners  
next year. The ACT will begin offering  
accommodations on the ACT exam  
in the 2017–18 school year. The  
College Board, which administers the  
SAT test and subject tests, will offer  
accommodations for English learners  
starting now.

For more information, please find press  
releases for the ACT and the College  
Board at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

**Contact:** [ACT.Questions@tn.gov](mailto:ACT.Questions@tn.gov)

### *State Trauma Resources Available*

TN Schools Prepare website  
([www.tnschoolsprepare.com](http://www.tnschoolsprepare.com))  
offers information on children's  
typical trauma reactions; activities  
for children in the aftermath of  
trauma, grief and loss; and sample  
communications for schools.

The Coalition to Support  
Grieving Students created  
[www.grievingstudents.org](http://www.grievingstudents.org), a  
website designed to provide  
educators with the information,  
insights and practical advice they  
need to better understand and meet

the needs of the millions of grieving  
kids in America's classrooms.  
Multiple self-paced modules are  
available for educators to assist  
children with various types of grief.

The Tennessee Suicide Prevention  
Network (TSPN) and Crisis Text  
Line, a free, 24/7 text-messaging  
support line for people in crisis,  
recently announced the launch of a  
partnership bringing crisis support  
to anyone in the state. People in  
Tennessee can text "TN" to 741-741 to  
connect with a crisis counselor.

### *Infinite Campus Resources*

As families continue to receive  
their Family Portal login credentials  
in the mail, it is important that we  
continue to educate ourselves on the  
features that Infinite Campus (IC)  
has to offer.

A video overview of the Family  
Portal can be found on [mnps.org](http://mnps.org)  
and the IC training site. In addition,  
the campus community has been  
created by learning technology and is  
available here: <http://idlearningtech.org/ICTeach/index.html>. Metro  
Schools will continue to explore best  
ways to make sure that all staff feel  
comfortable in the system.

### *Jan. 31 is the Deadline for Sharing ESSA Feedback*

The Department of Education has  
posted a draft ESSA plan and a  
section-by-section feedback form on  
the department's website. They have  
also posted several resources from  
the town hall events: a handout about  
the opportunities under ESSA, a video  
of the presentation, the PowerPoint  
presentation itself and an online  
survey with the town hall questions.  
The public comment period will close  
Jan. 31.

### *Local Artist Exhibits at Churchwell*

Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet  
Elementary is hosting a new exhibit  
featuring local artist Herb Williams.  
Herb is known for his unique  
sculptures made from Crayola  
Crayons. His newest works will be  
featured in an exhibit entitled "The  
ABC's of Art" which will be on display  
until March 13. A public assembly and  
gallery reception will be held on Feb  
8 at 9 a.m.