

# Forward **FOCUS**

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

IN THIS ISSUE: UNICYCLE PROGRAM • BUS DRIVER INSPIRES STUDENTS & COMMUNITY • STAFF PROMOTION



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Dr. Shawn Joseph*

Last week, I referenced the recommendations of the Transition Team. I'd like to continue this week by sharing some of the strengths of our district the team shared in its report. They include:

- MNPS is working on building trust with constituents
- We have a hard-working staff whose passion is evident
- We have a wide variety of school choices, innovative programs, and special programs
- We have improved technology and improved communication through our website and social media
- We are improving our human resources functions
- We have moderate growth in graduation rates and high school end of course exams
- We have improved communications within the school district

It disturbed me to see some media reports which suggested we have hundreds of "problems." All organizations have areas that need improvement, and the transition report effectively highlights areas of continuous improvement. We will have the courage to be honest about what we need to improve, and we will improve those areas.

Thank you again for staying engaged, and know that as we move through this budget season, we will work to demonstrate our commitment to increasing support to you as we raise levels of excellence within this school district.

## FEATURE STORY



Love is in the air and we're excited to celebrate just some of the things we love about Metro Schools! As such a large organization (the second largest in the city, to be exact!), it's nearly impossible to share every piece of good news happening across the district. We are always proud of our teachers' and staff's dedication to their jobs and of our students' dedication to their education, but this week we wanted to share some things

with you that you may not have heard about yet. We're seeing heart-eye emojis about some of the projects and initiatives listed on page two.

The Forward Focus team always wants to know what's happening in your department or school. Share your stories with us here: <http://bit.ly/ForwardFocus>

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♥ **MUSIC PROGRAMS**

We love the way our music programs are creating cultural crossroads within the community - like East High School's recent participation in an invitational choral festival with the Nashville Symphony.



♥ **COMMUNITY BASED TRANSITIONS**

With the Transitions Program, Metro Schools provides a continuum of services to students with disabilities, including life skills instruction and a Community Based Transition Program (CBTP). CBTP provides community-based training experiences for students who have graduated with a special education diploma. Students complete vocational training through various non-paid internships throughout the metro Nashville area. In addition, students spend part of the school day learning functional academics and life skills. There are eight CBTP classrooms in Nashville and more than 30 business partners participate in the program.

♥ **ACADEMIES OF NASHVILLE**

We love celebrating – especially our Academies of Nashville's 10 Year Anniversary. The Academies celebrated with a recommitment ceremony for 360+ business partners. Since the Academies began in 2006-2007, the district has seen improvement in graduation rates, EOC scores, attendance rates, and discipline rates for the 12 zoned high schools.

♥ **NPL PARTNERSHIP**

We love our community partnerships, like our program with the Nashville Public Library: Limitless Libraries. This partnership serves all MNPS students gives students access to the NPL collection and the ability to get items delivered directly to their school. Regardless of what school students attend, they have access to a high-quality school librarian and collection.

♥ **HEALTH / WELLNESS CENTER**

MNPS' commitment to health and wellness for all employees is something to love! We're eagerly counting down the days until the Health and Wellness Center is open for business. Some of the features will include on-site Vanderbilt Health clinics, a pharmacy, physical therapy, a gym and a walking track.



♥ **MNPS NUTRITION SERVICES**

We love the MNPS Nutrition Services team for their commitment and dedication to healthy and creative meals for our students! Our Head Chef, Rebecca Polson, shares lunch meals over on twitter.



Follow along for an insider's look: [@MNPSChefRebecca](https://twitter.com/MNPSChefRebecca)

♥ **HERO PROGRAM**

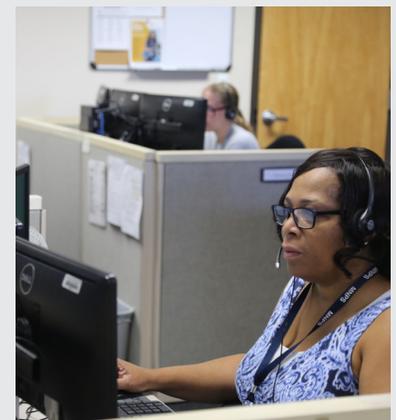
We love that The Homeless Education Resource Office (HERO) Program works with community partners to address a variety of needs for students experiencing homelessness. The HERO Program and Oasis Center are currently recruiting high school students to participate in a workforce development program that includes career coaching, leadership development and employment. *(Teachers: if you have a student (at least 16 years old) you think would be a good candidate, email [Catherine.Knowles@mnps.org](mailto:Catherine.Knowles@mnps.org))*

♥ **COMMUNITY ACHIEVES**

We love our Community Achieves department and the work they do to encourage school and community engagement. Take, for example, Buena Vista Elementary, where Terrence Graves, the North Precinct MNPD Commander, started a new project which gets police officers into local schools reading to classrooms once a month. Graves reads to a kindergarten class on Mondays and is going to start bringing his fellow police officers with him to do the same in other schools. His goal is to have an officer assigned to every Metro school.

♥ **FAMILY INFORMATION CENTER**

We love the Family Information Center because not many major, urban school districts have a dedicated customer service team to serve families. Every month, our FIC staff responds to, on average, 500 online chats and emails, answers 11,000 phone calls, and interacts with 1,000 visitors in the FIC lobby. With a staff of only 10 employees, they are a small but mighty group!





Taffy Marsh, Jeremy Stover, Anna Shepherd and Dr. Shawn Joseph

## STOVER DRIVES STUDENTS TO DO THEIR BEST

Last month, Metro Schools employee Jeremy Stover was honored at the Board Meeting for his heroic actions outside of work, risking his own life to notify a family that their house was on fire and helping them to safety. At work, his daily actions can also be categorized as heroic - Stover is an exceptional education bus driver who transports children with special needs to and from school every day. He not only transports them, but gets to know each child's temperament, medical needs and personality. Most of all, he makes the children and their families comfortable and safe.

"I get to know my kids on an individual basis—I know what they like, what makes them happy and keep up with their medical conditions," said Stover, "I am the first and last person these students see on their school day so I try my best to brighten their day."

Stover is also a pastor, another emotionally focused but rewarding career. Stover was inspired to become a pastor after his grandfather, whose own dream was to lead a church, passed away. Since he was unable to pursue that dream, Stover completed it in his honor. He is able to utilize the same mentoring skills he uses on Sunday in a different but equally beneficial way at school. Before driving exceptional education students, Stover transported troubled teens. He was able to help two teen boys turn their lives around simply by letting them know there was someone who cared about their futures. Those young men are now in college and still staying out of trouble partly because of Stover's interest in their lives.

"For all of my students I tell them to have respect and integrity, and not to let anyone tell them they can't do something," said Stover.

No matter which students Stover is transporting, he celebrates their individual differences and hones in on how he can be a positive role model and influence in their lives.

## UNICYCLE FINDS A HOME AT PERCY PRIEST ELEMENTARY



Catherine Knowles, Jami Oakley and Melinda Williams

When Jami Oakley first moved to Nashville, she was looking to immerse herself in the community and get involved. After reading an article about Catherine Knowles, the director of the Homeless Education Resource Office (HERO) at Metro Schools, Oakley knew she wanted to help Knowles with her enormous task of serving Nashville's homeless community. From there, UniCycle was created—a volunteer-run, 501(c)(3) program that collects and redistributes "outgrown, not worn out" standard school attire to needy students.

From a program that started with a single donation basket at Percy Priest Elementary, UniCycle has grown to serve approximately 30 schools and has given out nearly 10,000 items of clothing. UniCycle works with schools to identify a point person, set up a centrally-located laundry basket for donations and then assists in either supplementing the school's own collection to keep emergency closets full or taking excess collected items into the UniCycle warehouse for redistribution.

This winter, Percy Priest Principal Melinda Williams designated unused space at PPE to house the organization, which will allow it to expand to serve more students and schools. The advantages of having a central location for the program have already shown—among other benefits, Oakley can spend more time preparing donations since she no longer needs to drive to individual schools to collect the clothing—the donations can now be sent to her through school mail.

"Being in this building at PPE is huge and has changed everything in every way," said Oakley. "It is such a blessing."

Oakley hopes that with this new space, UniCycle will be able to expand their services in Metro Schools and eventually every school will have an emergency stockpile of clothing to use for students as needed. Halfway through the school year, the program has already collected more than 6,000 clothing items and the steady stream of donations and a full portable of children's clothes indicate this number will continue to climb.



### TRANSITION TEAM REPORT

VIEW THE FULL TRANSITION TEAM REPORT HERE:  
<http://bit.ly/2k37zUv>



## CALENDAR

### NOW UNTIL APRIL 15

Free Tax Prep with United Way VITA Program  
[www.unitedwaynashville.org/programs/vita](http://www.unitedwaynashville.org/programs/vita)

### FEBRUARY 20

President's Day  
Students do not report, teachers report for professional development.

### FEBRUARY 23

REAL Nashville: Coffee Shop Talks (Mayor Barry's Shop Talk series): Focused on themes from the 2017 Nashville Reads selection  
March: Book One by Rep. John Lewis and Andrew Aydin.  
6 - 8 p.m.  
*Bongo Java Belmont*  
2007 Belmont Blvd, Nashville, TN 37212

### FEBRUARY 28

Board of Education Meeting  
5 p.m.  
*Central Office Board Room*  
2601 Bransford Ave. Nashville, TN 37204

### MARCH 1

Priority Deadline for Read to be Ready summer grant applications  
Learn more: <http://bit.ly/Read2bR>

### MARCH 6-10

Kindergarten Registration Kick-Off Week

### MARCH 27- APRIL 7

Prekindergarten Application Period

### APRIL 1

Kindergarten Readiness Fair  
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
*Lentz Public Health Center*



**METRO NASHVILLE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
*Exceeding Great Expectations*

2601 Bransford Ave • Nashville, TN 37204  
615-259-INFO (4636) • [WWW.MNPS.ORG](http://WWW.MNPS.ORG)

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

### *Predator Hockey Educator Appreciation Nights Feb. 21 and 23*

#### • TUESDAY, FEB. 21 VS. CALGARY AT 7 P.M. FEATURING GUARANTEED WIN NIGHT

All fans in attendance will receive a winning scratch-off card with \$5 million in prizes to be awarded throughout the season, including a \$5,000 Dillard's gift card.

#### • THURSDAY, FEB. 23 VS. COLORADO AT 7 P.M. FEATURING HOCKEY HAPPY HOUR

Half-priced select beverages from 5-6:30 p.m. Use promo code APPLES to unlock \$25 Upper Level, \$35 Club Level and \$45 Lower Level ticket options available while supplies last (reg. \$45-\$89).

### *W-2's Available on Employee Self Service (ESS)*

2016 W-2's are now available on ESS (<https://ess.nashville.gov>) for employees to print. On your ESS home page click on "W-2 view" in the bottom left corner. Select the year you want to print and click "print W-2" on the middle right of the page.

### *Call for 2017 MNPS Expo Judges*

The 2017 MNPS Expo will be held on March 13-15 at the Boone Business Building on the campus of Trevecca

Nazarene University. Volunteers are needed to serve as judges for the student projects on all three days of the Expo. Judging interviews will run in shifts from 8 -10 a.m. and 10 a.m -12:15 p.m. each day. You will have the option of choosing one or multiple shifts. Once you have signed up, a brief training overview and materials review will be provided.

Click here to volunteer:

<http://bit.ly/2k87DT0>. The link will allow you to choose from a number of options that will best fit your schedule.

### *Educators' Cooperative at USN*

The Educators' Cooperative at University School of Nashville is now accepting applications for the 2017 cohort. This week long summer professional development opportunity is open to preK- 12 teachers. The Cooperative brings teachers together to collaborate and share best practices in teaching and learning. Visit [www.educatorscooperative.org](http://www.educatorscooperative.org) for more information.

### *National School Breakfast Week March 6- 10*

Mark your calendar for National School Breakfast Week! This year's theme, "Take the School Breakfast Challenge," encourages parents, students and school officials to start their morning with a healthy breakfast. Learn more at <http://schoolnutrition.org>.

## STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

### DAVID WILLIAMS PROMOTED TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION



Metro Nashville Public Schools has selected Dr. David Williams, currently serving as interim

executive director of curriculum and instruction, to fill this position full-time. Dr. Williams' promotion is effective Friday, Feb. 17.

Dr. Williams is a graduate of MNPS elementary, middle, and junior high schools. His career with MNPS includes serving as a mathematics teacher, an instructional coach, and the

director of mathematics for the district. Williams also served at the state level as the coordinator of Mathematics Content and Resources for the Tennessee Department of Education for three years.

Dr. Williams has a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy from Vanderbilt University, an administrator's endorsement from Lipscomb University, a master's in Education from Wake Forest University, and a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Auburn University.