BACKGROUND

The Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools system is in search of a bold, innovative leader capable of bringing the community together behind an ambitious vision for public school excellence. Not only is this an opportunity to lead the public school system in one of the fastest-growing cities in America, but also it is an opportunity to take the 42nd-largest school district in the country to new heights at a critical moment for the city and the school system.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

While many urban school districts have seen enrollment decline in recent years, that has not been the case in Nashville. We've seen consistent increases in enrollment – today serving more than 86,000 students in 166 schools across the city. With an annual operating budget of \$800 million, local investment in the public schools means MNPS represents 42% of the total Metro budget. The district's workforce is composed of 10,300 employees (including 5,302 certified teachers), making it one of the top local employers.

Three-fourths of students in the district – 75.3% – are economically disadvantaged. Sixty-nine percent of our students are minorities. In addition to overall growth, Nashville has seen the number of English language learners more than double over a 10-year period from 2004 to 2014. Today, one in every four children entering kindergarten comes from a non-English-speaking home, and 16.2% of all students are English language learners.

Over the last five years, Nashville's students have experienced important academic gains, often outpacing those of the state overall. At the high school level, the gains have been more significant. While there has been progress, as in most urban school systems, our students still struggle to meet state standards let alone a higher bar in terms of college or postsecondary readiness or success. We know that is a challenge, particularly given the fact that 60% of the jobs that will be created in Nashville over the next five years will require a bachelor's degree or better and the vast majority of the rest will require some level of postsecondary education (i.e., two-year college, trade certification, etc.).

And, as with our peers, efforts to tackle underperforming schools have lagged. The number of schools deemed "priority schools" by the state, meaning they are in the bottom 5% statewide and therefore subject to state takeover, has increased. Today, approximately 60% of MNPS students are enrolled in a school that falls in the bottom quarter of all public schools in Tennessee. We know that these challenges have long-term impacts on our students and our community. As we approach this search, the hope is to find a leader who can help construct a vision and path forward that builds on the important work done to date but who can also help us accelerate improvement while maintaining high vigilance around the social and emotional development of children.

THE NASHVILLE ADVANTAGE

While we, as do all urban school systems, face many daunting challenges, the opportunity to lead the Nashville school system offers many unique assets that other cities cannot point to:

- **ALIGNMENT OF CITY LEADERSHIP**. This search process itself marks an important turning point for the city with the School Board, the newly elected mayor, and the philanthropic and business communities' joining hands to find and hire a great leader.
- **GROWING COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER CONSENSUS**. Recent survey data show remarkable consensus within the community on the type of leader we seek (see attached community feedback summary). While oftentimes teachers or parents are in a different place, that is not the case in Nashville. There is growing consensus around the work that awaits and a readiness to get going.
- A DEEP AND ENGAGED PRIVATE SECTOR. The private sector and philanthropic community remain deeply engaged and committed to the public schools. In fact, there is a commitment to increasing the level of private investment in the schools.
- **NATIONAL RECOGNITION**. Nashville is clearly a city that many around the country are watching as it relates to public education. There has been increased national philanthropic interest, and moreover, some key innovations like the Academies and the Music Makes Us programs have attracted national attention. For example, President Barack Obama, former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and Dr. Jill Biden have visited to see what Nashville is doing with its Academies, and we've been recognized repeatedly for a highly innovative music education program deeply rooted in our schools across the city.
- **RICH WITH EDUCATIONAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ASSETS**. Nashville is home to many prominent universities and colleges of education. We also have a vibrant and rapidly growing entrepreneurial community. All of this affords a director of schools many unusually sophisticated assets, resources and expertise.
- IMPORTANT STATE ASSETS THAT STRENGTHEN LOCAL INVESTMENT. Last but not least, a statewide focus on improving public schools gives Nashville a leg up. Efforts like Drive to 55 are a huge boost to local efforts aimed at increasing the college-going rate. Other efforts were made possible at the state level in association with Nashville's securing early "Race to the Top" funds.

Moreover, Nashville itself offers many assets:

- Nashville is one of the most popular places in America for individuals and families to relocate to. It has been recognized in publications worldwide, including:
 - No. 5 "cities Americans are flocking to" by Forbes magazine
 - Best Performing cities in America by the Milken Institute
 - Hottest cities in 2016 by Business Insider magazine
 - Fourth-friendliest city in America by Conde Nast Publishing

- The city offers a thriving creative economy that is a magnet for millennials, technology companies, corporate headquarters and health care policy leaders.
- Nashville is also a college town with 110,000 students in 17 colleges and
 universities, including Vanderbilt University, Tennessee State University, Meharry
 Medical College, Trevecca Nazarene University, Belmont University, Fisk University
 and Lipscomb University just to name a few. That provides a unique 'vibe' that
 only 110,000 20-somethings can provide to the city in addition to providing access
 to two of the nation's top teacher prep programs.
- The cost of living is 10% below the U.S. average, and there is no personal income
 tax on earnings in the state of Tennessee. This means that people who relocate here
 take home more of their paycheck, and can afford a higher quality of life because of
 low-cost living.
- As Music City, the city has one of the top arts and music scenes in the world with everything from professional sports with the NFL and NHL, a world-class symphony and parks system, and round-the-clock entertainment options unmatched by any city in America.

CANDIDATE CORE COMPETENCIES

While there are many traits and qualities we aspire to find in candidates, there are four areas of acute interest. Candidates must be able to articulate specific ideas around all four and a concrete track record in at least two:

COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND VISION-CASTING CAPACITY. First and foremost, we seek a leader who is able to establish, articulate and build community support for a clear vision for public school excellence. This requires someone who:

- Has a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change.
- Is a strong communicator to both internal and external audiences, skilled at building consensus and partnerships across stakeholder groups.
- Is decisive and willing to hold himself/herself accountable for measurable outcomes.
- Understands the importance of having strong working relationships with key stakeholders, including the Board of Education.

ORGANIZATIONAL/CULTURE CHANGE EXPERTISE. Our district is going through a period of great change and transition. We seek a leader with specific experience managing change and helping to facilitate larger organizational culture changes. This includes:

- Knowing how to build a strong senior management team.
- The ability to inspire and build confidence of the workforce, particularly teachers.
- Someone smart about the scale and sequencing of change in the name of longterm success, staying power and stability.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TALENT AND TURNAROUND. Tantamount to MNPS' success is having bold and creative approaches to fortifying teacher talent (i.e., recruiting, retaining, growing and supporting great teachers) and more assertively addressing turnaround of under-performing schools. Without accelerated progress on these two fronts, other efforts will be stymied. We seek candidates with deep knowledge and/or innovative ideas in both areas.

EXPERTISE WITH SIMILAR STUDENT POPULATIONS. We serve a highly diverse, urban student population. We seek a candidate who has specific experience working with and getting results with a similar population (i.e., high racial, ethnic, religious, ability, socio-economic and language diversity).

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The four qualities above are the drivers and "litmus test" for effective candidates. That said, there are many other personal characteristics we will look for evidence of in determining the best candidate:

- A strong listener listens to and effectively represents the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents and community members.
- **Engenders trust and respect** fosters a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff and administrators.
- A leader with integrity operates honestly, with integrity and a sense of moral purpose.
- **Prioritizes visibility in schools and community** regards being visible in the schools and the community as essential functions of the position.
- **Prioritizes talent at all levels** understands the importance of recruiting, developing and retaining highly qualified staff at all levels in the district.