

PICKING  
UP THE

# PACE

Building the Schools  
that Can Propel  
Nashville's Prosperity



Nashville  
Public Education  
FOUNDATION

[nashvillepef.org](http://nashvillepef.org)

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June 2015

Dear Nashvillians,

Our schools are at a crossroads. Important improvements have been made in recent years, though any objective look at the numbers tells you that we still have a long way to go. Despite hard-fought gains, our schools still lag significantly behind those in other cities — both in Tennessee and beyond. As we prepare to elect a new mayor and hire a new director of schools, it is imperative that our city not simply tread water or, worse yet, retreat. Instead, it is time to **pick up the pace**.

We must not squander this moment to rally behind a bold, innovative vision for the future of our schools. A vision that doesn't settle for being just a little better than we were last year but rather seeks to substantially accelerate improvement. And a vision that brings more voices into the discussion.

To ensure an informed debate, the Nashville Public Education Foundation, with the support of many community partners, has launched Project RESET. We brought in The Parthenon Group, a leading national strategic consulting firm, to provide an independent analysis of how Nashville stacks up compared to other cities. Parthenon has deep expertise working on these issues with more than 30 different cities and districts, including communities in Tennessee.

As you read this report, keep three things in mind:

1. **Saying that we're nowhere near where we need to be is not the same as saying that we aren't doing anything right.** Many people work tirelessly everyday on behalf of Nashville's kids. There are many success stories. The question is whether we're moving fast enough and deploying good ideas systemically across a larger number of schools and neighborhoods.
2. **We are advocates for great public schools, regardless of what you call them** — zoned schools, magnet schools, enhanced option schools, or charter schools. We firmly believe that there are no silver bullets or cure-all solutions for successfully turning around a city's public schools. Consequently, read with an open mind that there may be multiple approaches worth pursuing.
3. **This effort is designed to transcend individual organizations and/or political agendas.** It is intended to be about more than just K-12 education, targeting a true, citywide cradle-to-career approach.

With that background, dive in. Read. Ask questions. Engage in the conversation.

But then let's roll up our sleeves and do what needs to be done. Let's be bold and daring in our pursuit of excellence. Do it for the city's 84,000 public school kids. Do it for your own success and livelihoods. Do it for the city we love.

Sincerely,



Shannon Hunt  
President & CEO



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our economy is booming — outpacing the state and other major U.S. cities in creating jobs. And not just any jobs, but good jobs in “advanced industries” like health care and IT.

But to ensure that Nashville residents can fill these good jobs — now and in the future — our education system needs to pick up the pace.

About 60% of new jobs created over the next five years will require a bachelor’s or master’s degree. Most of the other jobs will also require some higher education or training. But only 29% of our public school students (district and charter) score a 21 or higher on the ACT, a basic threshold for college readiness.

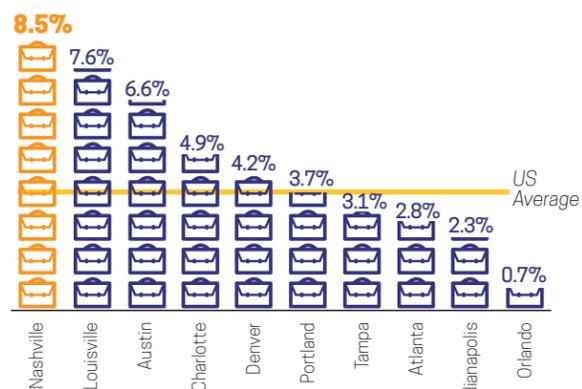
Among 10 benchmark cities, Nashville is in the middle to back of the pack in terms of progress in reading proficiency, high school graduation rates, and college success.

The challenges start early. Fewer than half of Nashville students in grades 3–8 meet state standards in reading and math. Only slightly more than half meet high school standards in English II and Algebra I. And Tennessee’s standards are low — in the bottom half nationally.

In fact, nearly 60% of students in Nashville attend one of the lowest-performing schools in the state. There are entire neighborhoods where this situation is particularly acute, with a majority of students enrolled in schools that fall in the bottom 25% of all public schools in the state.

Part of the challenge is that the city is serving a comparatively high and growing percentage of students who typically struggle in school —

## We outpace other cities in creating good jobs



Annual growth rate in employment in advanced industries, selected MSAs, 2010 to 2013

Source: Brookings Institute and Moody’s Analytics; American Community Survey

## Many Nashville students are not meeting state standards

Nashville students in grades 3–8 meeting the state standards in TCAP reading or math



Nashville high school students meeting standards in English II and Algebra I end-of-course assessments



Source: Tennessee Department of Education; Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

students living in poverty (72%) and English language learners (15%).

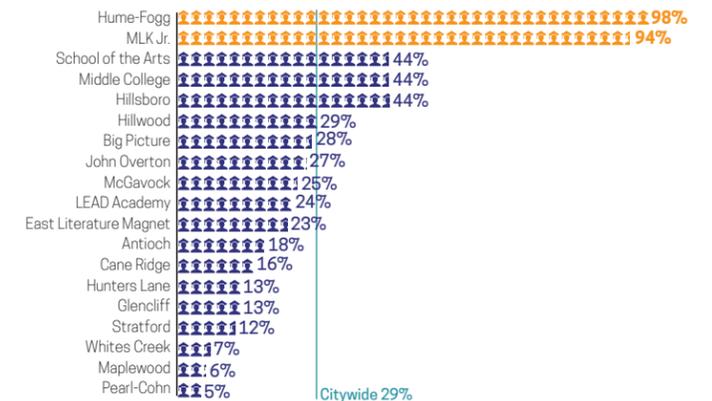
Even schools in the wealthier neighborhoods are not adequately preparing most students for success after high school. Only two high schools — both academic magnets — have a majority of their students ready for college, according to the ACT.

It’s not just about educating workers for college or jobs. Better education yields many other benefits that impact everyone — from better health to less crime and more volunteering.

This is not to say important gains have not been made. Indeed, they have. But Nashville is still falling considerably short of where it can and should be. This must be addressed as a city priority, not just a K–12 priority. A failure to pick up the pace will threaten Nashville’s ability to sustain its economic success long term. In the medium term, it is creating a precarious “tale of two cities” with acute neighborhood and socioeconomic divides that have been the undoing of other cities.

Despite these challenges, there is great hope that Nashville can tackle these issues and post big gains with its schools and, in turn, improve the citywide outlook for kids and families. While there is no “playbook” for successfully turning around a city’s public schools, some communities are seeing breakthrough success with clear strategies, and Nashville itself has advantages that few other cities share.

## Only two high schools — both magnets — produce more than 50% college-ready graduates



Source: Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

## Economic benefits of a college degree are rising



Median earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34 with at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to high school graduates

Assuming a degree-holder continues to earn about 80% more than a high school graduate over the course of a 40-year career, this premium translates to **an extra \$1.8M in earnings overall**

Source: Urban Institute, “Higher Education Earnings Premium: Value, Variation, and Trends” (Baum; 2014)



**Specifically, there are five major strategies worth exploring as the city looks to substantially pick up the pace of improvement:**



**TALENT:**

Launch a much more assertive set of initiatives designed to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teachers. Given

Nashville's attractiveness as a great place to live, the city is uniquely positioned to succeed here — perhaps more so than most other cities.



**AUTONOMY:**

Give principals and teacher leaders the full flexibility they need to dramatically improve their schools. Some early steps

have been taken that provide some useful building blocks.



**ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL:**

To recognize the rich diversity and varied education landscape of local communities, bring together stakeholders in support

of cluster-specific strategies that work for all kids, regardless of school governance.



**EARLY LEARNING:**

Broaden the focus on early childhood education with ambitious steps across the birth-to-nine timeframe, building school readiness and early literacy skills.



**POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS:**

Expand efforts to bolster college access and success, with an eye toward capitalizing on statewide investments in

this area. Specifically, seek to surround kids with the supports that will not only help them start college but also help them persist to earn a two- or four-year degree.

**Bottom line:** *While important progress has been made, our schools are not where we need them to be. A city with world-class aspirations must do a great deal more to improve our public schools. Success will require the full muscle of the city and a true cradle-to-career vision.*



# INTRODUCTION NASHVILLE'S CHALLENGE

*Nashville has one of the country's fastest-growing economies and leads all competitor cities in creating great jobs. But how can we strengthen our public schools so that they keep pace with the growing economy and leave no student or neighborhood behind?*

In recent years, Nashville has proven itself to be a city that can compete with — and surpass — other leading, high-growth cities in attracting high-quality jobs and talent. Economically, Nashville is leading the pack, growing at a rate that few, if any, cities in the United States can match.

There is an open question, however, as to whether Nashville's students are being prepared to participate in, much less help to drive, this future growth. More than 60 percent of the jobs that will be created in Nashville over the next five years will require a postsecondary degree, yet only 38 percent of adults currently living in Nashville hold such a degree, and only 29 percent of 11th graders in Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) are testing at a "college-ready" level on the ACT.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of students who graduate high school in four years and go on to enroll in a two- or four-year college (44 percent for MNPS) is lower in Nashville than in any surrounding county or other urban city in Tennessee.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 60 percent of Nashville's students attend a school that is in the bottom quartile of all schools in the state, in terms of student achievement.<sup>3</sup>

These headline statistics — and the greater detail that follows in this report — are indicative of a city that needs to both raise the bar and pick up the pace when it comes to education.

charter schools — to empower that talent with greater freedom to make key educational decisions. The rich diversity of local communities holds the potential for a diverse and innovative set of school options, provided the city can break out of a one-size-fits-all mindset. And Nashville benefits from a range of resources — highly regarded local universities, an active private sector, and a statewide push for college success — that could serve as fuel to accelerate progress. Each of these advantages points to logical and bold potential strategies that could better prepare students for success in college, careers, and life.

The first step toward building on Nashville's strengths is to agree upon a set of facts about where the city stands today. Our report draws entirely from publicly available data to make the case that, educationally speaking, Nashville is in the middle or back of the pack when compared to competing cities in Tennessee and beyond. Vast inequities in the quality of educational options persist, compounding and reinforcing the cycle of poverty in certain neighborhoods. And even in those areas of the city where schools are meeting minimum educational standards, students often lack rigorous preparation for postsecondary success.

## COMPETING REALITIES

A growing economy, struggling schools

**Nashville has created more jobs** than the rest of the state combined and leads 10 benchmark U.S. cities in creating good jobs.

**BUT**

60% of these jobs require **two or four years of college**

Only **29%** of Nashville students are prepared for that

## Building on our many assets

Ultimately, our view of the future for education in Nashville is highly optimistic, based on advantages Nashville has that few other cities can boast. The city is a magnet for talent, and has taken early steps — in both MNPS district schools and public

## A first step

Picking up the pace on education in Nashville will require a citywide conversation that stretches beyond the K–12 system; it must feature deeper community engagement and an alignment of both public and private resources. This report serves as just a first step in that process. It has two primary goals:

- To provide an objective assessment of where Nashville stands — not just relative to its past but also compared to those cities with which it competes (Part 1).
- To draw inspiration and lessons from bright spots inside and outside of the city, and to suggest a potential path forward (Part 2).

We hope that this study serves as a clear and compelling catalyst for resetting, and then accelerating, the agenda for educational improvement in the city. We welcome your participation and feedback.

PART 1

# REALITY CHECK

## Booming Economy, Schools Struggling To Keep Pace

Nashville's economy is thriving. Since 2009, the Metro Nashville region has created more jobs on its own than the rest of the state combined.<sup>4</sup> The majority of jobs in the Nashville metro area are in Davidson County, and Davidson has accounted for the greatest number of new jobs created over the past five years.

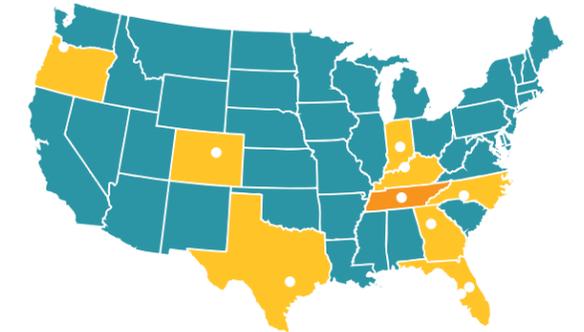
Throughout this report, we'll compare Nashville not only to other cities and counties in Tennessee but also to a set of national "benchmark cities" with which it competes for jobs and talent. All of these benchmark cities have recently seen job growth that is significantly higher than the national average. Against this tough competition, Nashville ranks second of the 10 for total job growth over the past five years.<sup>5</sup>

Even better, Nashville is creating the jobs that every city wants — high-growth, high-skill, high-paying jobs. Remarkably, in job growth within "advanced industries," Nashville not only leads the 10 benchmark cities but also the top 200 metropolitan areas in the country, according to a recent report from the Brookings Institute.<sup>6</sup>

While signs indicating Nashville's rapid economic progress are evident to many residents, the data documenting the degree of the city's emerging leadership position is still striking.

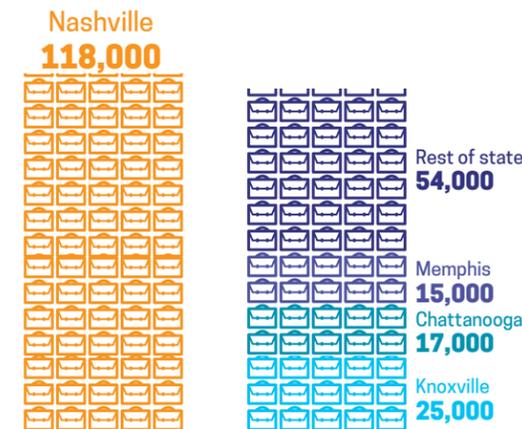
### Comparing Nashville to Peer Cities

Much of the data in this report compares Nashville to the nine major U.S. cities with which we compete for jobs and talent. They are midsized urban areas with above-average job growth. They are all ranked as attractive places to live.



- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Atlanta, GA                     | Nashville, TN                 |
| Austin, TX                      | Orlando/Orange County, FL     |
| Charlotte, NC                   | Portland, OR                  |
| Denver, CO                      | Tampa/Hillsborough County, FL |
| Indianapolis, IN                |                               |
| Louisville/Jefferson County, KY |                               |

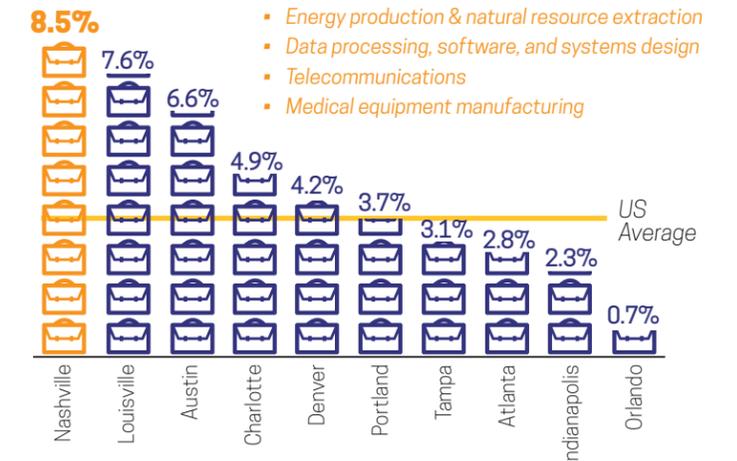
### Metro Nashville is creating more jobs than the rest of the state combined



Non-farm employment growth in select TN metropolitan areas, November 2009–November 2014

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

### And these are the right jobs



Annual growth rate in employment in advanced industries, selected MSAs, 2010 to 2013

Source: Brookings Institute and Moody's Analytics; American Community Survey

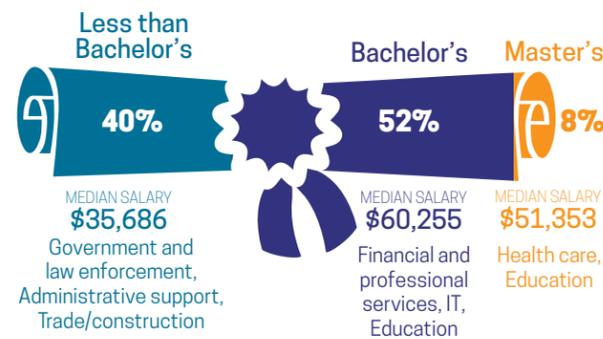
Nashville had the fastest growth rate among the top 200 metropolitan areas in jobs in "advanced industries" such as:

- Auto manufacturing
- Pharmaceuticals
- Energy production & natural resource extraction
- Data processing, software, and systems design
- Telecommunications
- Medical equipment manufacturing

**Our schools are not preparing students to benefit from this rising economic tide.**

Whether or not today's Nashville students will ever benefit from this surging growth hinges, in large part, on success in postsecondary education. Indeed, 60 percent of the projected new jobs created in the Metro Nashville area through 2020 will require a bachelor's or master's degree. These include jobs in healthcare, finance, professional services, and informational technology. Moreover, of the remaining jobs that don't currently require a bachelor's or master's degree — including positions in government/law enforcement, administrative support, and trade/construction — many will still require some level of postsecondary completion (e.g., a two-year college degree or a vocational training certificate).<sup>7</sup>

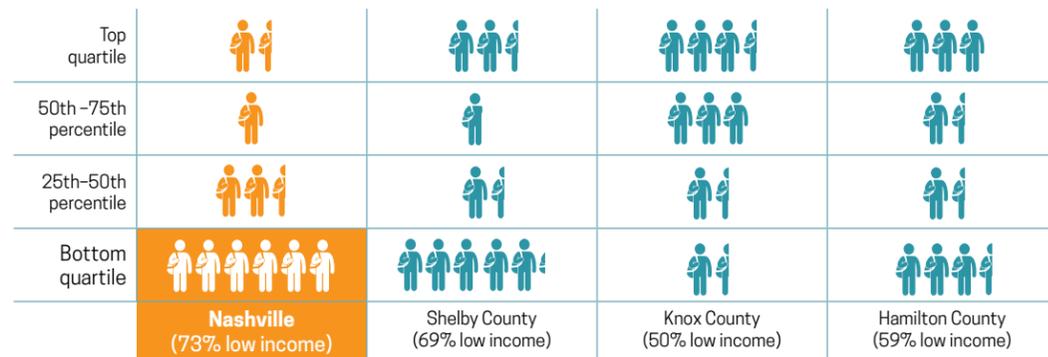
**Most of these jobs require education beyond high school**



Source: Tennessee Department of Labor

**About 60% of Nashville's students attend a school in the bottom quartile of all Tennessee schools**

1 person icon = 10% of students



Distribution of students by statewide school-level performance, SY2014, selected counties

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Parthenon-EY Analysis

The economy's rapid growth and strong economic trajectory create a clear dichotomy. Nashville has the good jobs and will likely continue to have them. But will Nashville's students have the education and skills required to fill those jobs?

While Nashville is leading the 10 benchmark cities in creating good jobs, it is eighth out of those 10 in the percentage of adults with postsecondary degrees (38 percent, about 10 points behind the leader, Austin).<sup>8</sup> Absent a change that dramatically increases its students' level of postsecondary success, Nashville will have to continue importing large numbers of workers to meet the demands of its economy. More generally, Nashville would be betting on the uncertain proposition that it can remain a leader economically while lagging in the education of its citizens.

**Some recent progress, but not nearly enough**

We do not see evidence that Nashville is acting with sufficient urgency to meet this challenge. Less than half of Nashville's public school students (district and charter) in grades 3-8 meet the state's TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) standards in reading or math.<sup>9</sup> Over 60 percent of Nashville students attend a school that ranks in the bottom quartile of all Tennessee schools; this in a state that itself already ranks in the bottom half of the country in terms of student achievement.<sup>10</sup>

**Little progress in closing achievement gaps**

Overall, Nashville's test scores lag the Tennessee state averages in all grades and subject areas. Moreover, these broad averages obscure large gaps in achievement in Nashville's schools, where economically disadvantaged students and English language learners (ELL) underperform their peers by large margins.<sup>11</sup>

Are figures improving rapidly enough that Nashville can be confident that its schools are on the right track? Against our set of 10 benchmark cities, Nashville ranks eighth in the size of its achievement gap vs. that of the state average, and ninth in its rate of improvement in reading proficiency.<sup>12</sup> Proficiency rates on state exams have increased over the past five years, but the gap between Nashville's performance and that of the state remains the same.<sup>13</sup>

Demographic achievement gaps have narrowed in some areas, but often because the performance of higher-achieving subgroups has stagnated or worsened, not because lower-performing students have gained rapidly. Many of Nashville's highest-achieving schools, in terms of absolute proficiency levels, actually show negative results in year-over-year student growth; their students may be starting from advantaged positions, but they are still falling behind their statewide peers.<sup>14</sup>

**Implications for the future**

Nashville can point to signs of progress, but that progress is not fast enough or widespread enough to meet the demands of the city's future.

It is important to recognize that Nashville's public schools face significant challenges with roots in poverty and other out-of-school dynamics. The percentage of students who are either economically disadvantaged and/or learning English has increased more in Nashville than in any other adjacent or urban county in Tennessee, and both subgroups (especially ELL students) have grown significantly over the last decade.<sup>15</sup> These facts, however, should only increase the energy and resources that Nashville devotes to improving educational performance.

Unless closed, educational achievement gaps will have a direct impact on Nashville's prosperity. By 2025, racial and ethnic minorities will be Nashville's new majority.<sup>16</sup> These students are the future workforce and future citizens of the city.

**Bottom line: Too few of the city's schools are good enough or progressing fast enough for a city like Nashville, which has world-class aspirations.**

**Many Nashville students are not meeting state standards**



Nashville students in grades 3-8 meeting the state standards in TCAP reading or math



Nashville high school students meeting standards in English II and Algebra I end-of-course assessments

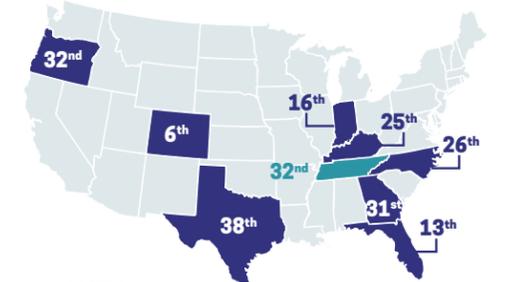


Nashville students meeting the ACT's college-readiness benchmarks

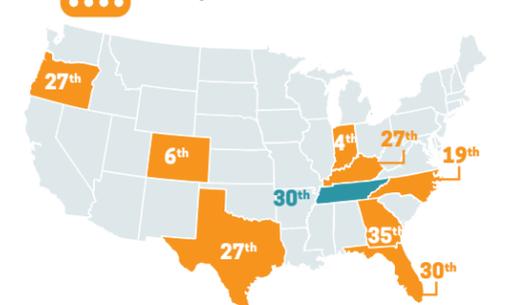
Source: Tennessee Department of Education; Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

**And other states far outpace Tennessee**

**READING** State rank, percentage of students proficient or advanced, NAEP reading, 4th grade, SY2013



**MATH** State rank, percentage of students proficient or advanced, NAEP math, 4th grade, SY2013



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), SY2013



**There is troubling inequity between areas of the city and in the level of rigor from school to school.**

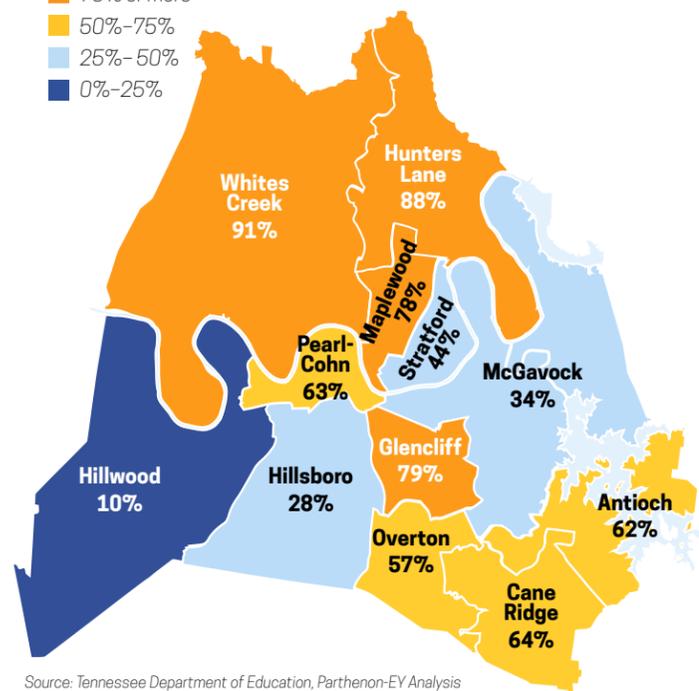
Overall, nearly 60 percent of Nashville students attend a school in the bottom quartile of all Tennessee public schools, a striking figure that captures starkly the challenging odds Nashville parents face in finding a high-quality school for their child.<sup>17</sup> These odds are reflected in rising enrollment for charter schools and waitlists at some charter and private schools, which provide alternatives to zoned district options.

In many areas of the city, the landscape is even more dire — nearly *all* students in several MNPS clusters attend one of the poorest-performing schools in the state. Given the relative scarcity of non-zoned school options in Nashville, families who live in the Whites Creek, Glenclyff, Maplewood, or Hunters Lane clusters face a particularly acute situation. The Pearl Cohn cluster benefits in this analysis from the fact that two academic magnet schools (Hume-Fogg and MLK) are geographically located in that area. Without the two magnets, 85 percent of the students in that cluster attend a bottom quartile school.<sup>18</sup>

**Some neighborhoods face acute challenges**

Schools performing in bottom quartile of all TN schools

- 75% or more
- 50%-75%
- 25%-50%
- 0%-25%



Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Parthenon-EY Analysis

**And not enough students are prepared for postsecondary education and training.**

Even schools in comparatively high-performing neighborhoods need to raise the bar.

Overall, high school graduation rates in Nashville are relatively strong and, in fact, have improved recently. Today, 79 percent of all Nashville students graduate from high school.<sup>19</sup> However, less than one-third of students graduate with a 21 or higher on the ACT, a widely accepted, national standard of basic college readiness.<sup>20</sup> In fact, only two of the city's 19 high schools prepare even half of their students for college, and both of those schools are selective academic magnets.<sup>21</sup>

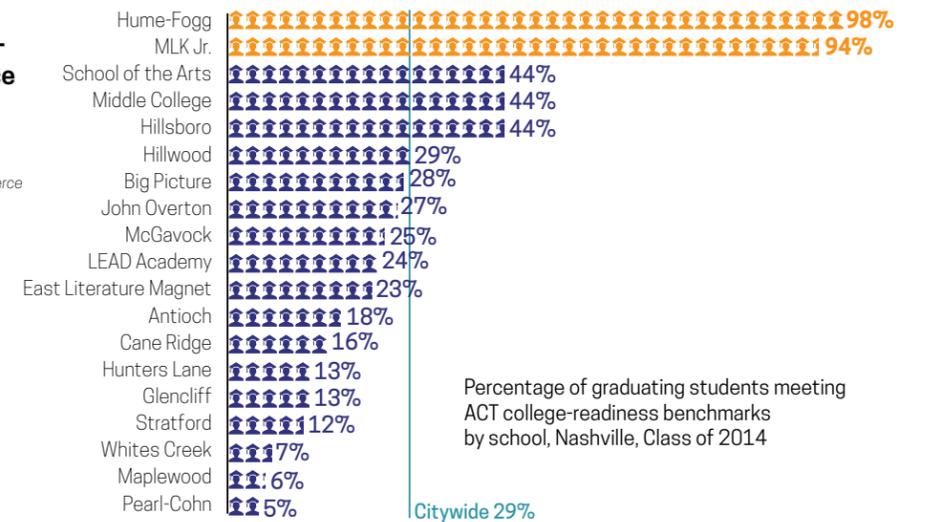
Furthermore, looking at indicators like the pass rate on Advanced Placement (AP) exams — often seen

as a proxy for whether a student is capable of doing college-level work — the school-by-school breakdown is shocking. Eighty percent of all AP exams passed in MNPS come from the two academic magnets.<sup>22</sup> These gaps in high school performance don't just reflect challenges in grades 9–12, of course; they are also indicative of the disparate levels of preparation that students have from their elementary and middle school years.

Outside of two magnet schools, high school graduation rates in Nashville may be rising. But without a focus that extends beyond graduating to insist on postsecondary readiness and completion, students will be poorly equipped for the future.

**Only two high schools — both magnets — produce more than 50% college-ready graduates**

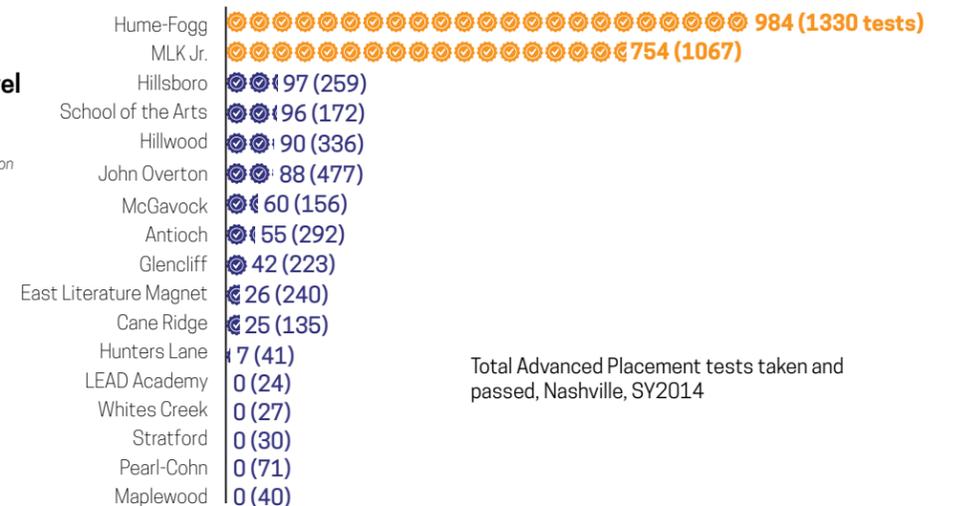
Source: Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce



Percentage of graduating students meeting ACT college-readiness benchmarks by school, Nashville, Class of 2014

**... or are preparing students for college-level courses**

Source: Tennessee Department of Education



Total Advanced Placement tests taken and passed, Nashville, SY2014

**The benefits of postsecondary completion are clear, both for students and for the community overall.**

The city's economy will continue to grow only if we have enough adults with the knowledge and skills to do the work. If not, the jobs will go elsewhere, or Nashville's employers will have to import more highly skilled employees, further worsening the growing divide between haves and have-nots.

Education is the gateway to prosperity, but too few are being sufficiently prepared. The need for Nashville to focus on postsecondary success is critical; data show that postsecondary completion is the ultimate indicator of educational success, and we need to make sure that students and families in all communities appreciate the critical importance of educational success in the 21st-century economy:

- Nationally, a college graduate earns 80 percent more in annual income than an individual with only a high school degree — a "premium" to education that has risen dramatically over the last 50 years.<sup>23</sup>
- Locally, about one-third of Nashville citizens who did not graduate from high school live in poverty, compared to less than five percent of those with a bachelor's degree.<sup>24</sup>

The choice is not just about jobs and higher incomes. Improved educational outcomes yield many additional benefits that impact everyone, whether one has a child in the public school system or not: better health, less crime, higher property values, and increased levels of voting and volunteerism, to name just a few.<sup>25</sup>

**Economic benefits of a college degree are rising**

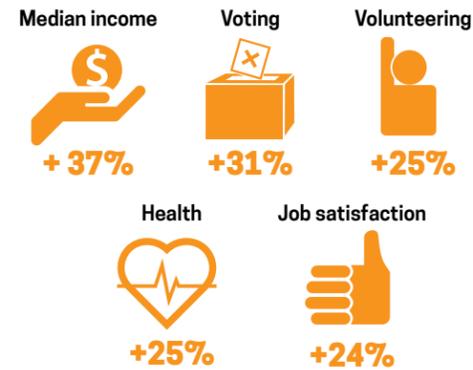
Assuming a degree-holder continues to earn about 80% more than a high school graduate over the course of a 40-year career, this premium translates to **an extra \$1.8M in earnings overall**



Median earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34 with at least a bachelor's degree, compared to high school graduates

Source: Urban Institute, "Higher Education Earnings Premium: Value, Variation, and Trends" (Baum, 2014)

**Benefits of college are not just financial**



Numbers represent percentage point difference between those with only a high school diploma and those with a bachelor's degree or higher

Source: Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society; Voting statistic for ages 25 to 44

**We can learn from schools that are making progress.**

Some schools in Nashville are making significant progress with students.

Within MNPS, there are a handful of schools, such as Glendale and Lockeland, that have both high achievement levels and strong student growth. At the same time, many of the highest-performing schools (on the basis of absolute test scores) in MNPS are lagging in terms of student growth, suggesting that more could be done to challenge students and accelerate learning even in schools that are regarded as being high quality.<sup>26</sup>

Examining student growth data across all Nashville public schools, the five schools with the most rapid gains are either charter schools or, as is the case of Cameron College Prep, managed by charter operators. These particular schools are showing rapid growth in student achievement even while serving high-poverty student populations.

**The strengths and limitations of public charters**

It is important to recognize that there is nothing about public charter schools as a model that makes them universally successful. Indeed, in some of our benchmark cities, such as Orlando and Austin, charter schools underperform their district counterparts. Not all charter schools in Nashville are equally strong, and some have been closed for poor performance. At the same time, rigorous studies (such as a recent report from Stanford University) show that, on average, charter schools in Nashville are delivering strong results for students. Moreover, many charters are located in areas of the city that most need stronger school options.<sup>27</sup>

Including charter schools that are already operating, plus those that are approved to open, enrollment in Nashville's charter schools is projected to rise to more than 15 percent of the city's total student population by 2020 (vs. seven percent of students today).<sup>28</sup> Some high-performing networks would like to grow even faster. Thoughtful efforts will be required to ensure that the charter sector can maintain quality as it expands and that MNPS can plan for and manage the fiscal impact of this transition.

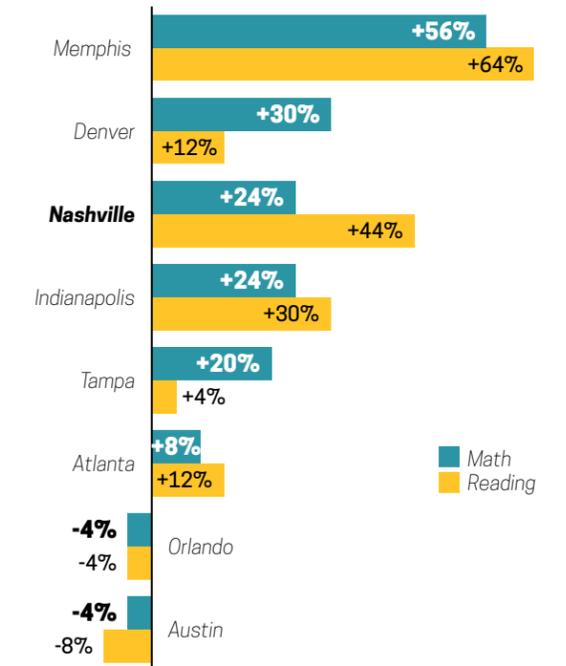
**Pockets of success at individual schools can serve as models for making progress**



- High-Growth Schools**
- Andrew Jackson Elementary
  - Cameron College Prep
  - Glendale Spanish Immersion Center
  - Granbery Elementary
  - Intrepid Prep
  - KIPP Academy
  - Liberty Collegiate
  - Lockeland Elementary Design Center
  - STEM Prep

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

**While public charter schools in benchmark cities have shown mixed results, Nashville's charter sector is a point of strength**



Bars represent amount of learning that a student achieves in a year in a charter school, relative to a traditional school, in that city

Source: Stanford University's CREDO "Urban Charter School Study 2015"



**To maintain our "it city" status and protect what Nashvillians love best about the city, we must pick up the pace on public education.**

Yet the level of focus on charter schools in the current climate can serve to obscure the basic reality that, in 2020, more than 80 percent of Nashville students will still be served in the MNPS district schools. The critical question raised by the success of Nashville's charter schools should be: can we generate more rapid progress in district schools? Improvement within MNPS demands focus and urgency.

**Charters are not the only way.**

Across the state, Shelby County is showing what is possible. In an effort to turn around low-performing schools, Shelby County established an "Innovation Zone," which is showing gains three to five times higher than in the district overall (and far in excess of the gains that MNPS is showing in its own Innovation Cluster).<sup>29</sup>

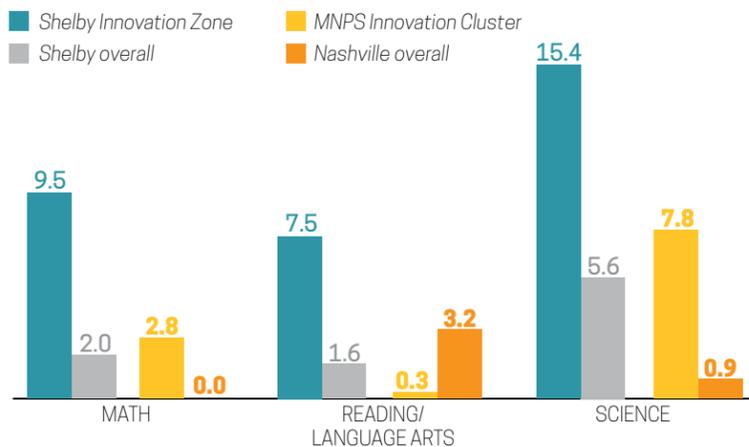
Comparing the approach of the Innovation Zone in Shelby County to the approach that MNPS has had in place over the past few years, there are clear factors that explain the difference in outcomes: getting the right school leaders and giving them flexibility to choose their staff and expand learning time; making

massive efforts to recruit great talent into high-need schools; and redefining the role of the central office to ensure that schools have support they need while empowering leaders to innovate. In Shelby County, these efforts have required significant levels of both public and private investment and have benefitted from a citywide urgency that exists far beyond the district central office.

These building blocks of district success in Shelby County — leadership, school-based innovation, a focus on talent, and a supportive but empowering central office — are, in fact, the same approaches that are found in successful charter schools.

Far more than any particular governance model (elected school board vs. charter authorizer), these common denominators of successful schools form a set of enabling conditions that should guide Nashville as it considers the way forward for education in the city. The outgoing MNPS administration has supported many of these enabling conditions, but not with the level of ambition or the attention to detail in implementation required to address the needs of Nashville's schools.

**Shelby County is doing a better job with its low-performing schools**



Average percentage point difference in the rate of students proficient or advanced in each of these subjects, SY2013-14

Source: Tennessee Department of Education data



PART 2

# FOCUS ON FIVE KEY STRATEGIES

*Building on Strengths,  
Learning from Others*

There is no playbook, and certainly no silver bullet, for successfully turning around a city's public schools. But our experience nationally has shown, first, that some places are seeing breakthrough success with clear strategies, and second, that Nashville itself has advantages that few other cities share.

Nashville's own strengths and assets will be the seeds of its success, while exemplars from around the country will point the way toward bigger and bolder plans. Determining how to build on areas of strength, but at the same time go much deeper and be far bolder, is the purpose of Project RESET.

# FIVE STRATEGIES WORTH EXPLORING

When we seek to connect our observations of Nashville's unique strengths with success stories of leaders in the field, the evidence indicates five major strategies that are worth exploring as the city looks to substantially pick up the pace of improvement:



## STRATEGY 1 TALENT

Launch a much more assertive set of initiatives designed to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teachers. Given Nashville's attractiveness as a great place to live, the city is uniquely positioned to succeed here — perhaps more so than most other cities.



## STRATEGY 2 AUTONOMY

Give principals and teacher leaders the full flexibility they need to dramatically improve their schools. Some early steps have been taken that provide some useful building blocks.



## STRATEGY 3 ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

To recognize the rich diversity and varied education landscape of local communities, bring together stakeholders in support of cluster-specific strategies that work for all kids, regardless of school governance.



## STRATEGY 4 EARLY LEARNING

Broaden the focus on early childhood with ambitious steps across the birth-to-nine timeframe, building school readiness and early literacy skills.



## STRATEGY 5 POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Expand efforts to bolster college access and success, with an eye toward capitalizing on statewide investments in this area. Specifically, seek to surround kids with the supports that not only help them start college but also persist to earn a two- or four-year degree.

The first three suggested priorities focus on finding great talent and putting these talented teachers and school leaders in positions to succeed. The last two ensure that our citywide focus addresses all parts of the learning pipeline, from cradle through college. These are not the only strategies that a city can pursue. But based on the Nashville's strengths and the experiences described in the following pages, they seem to us to be perhaps the most promising ones for this city.

**Other places have seen breakthrough results. Why not Nashville?**

## What about funding?

As Nashville tries to align behind a citywide agenda to improve its education system, it's natural that one of the questions on the table should be about funding. Considering its level of need, does Nashville have the right level of both public and private resources for education?

When comparing spending levels to achievement levels within the United States and internationally, one trend is clear — more spending on education does not necessarily correlate with the higher results. It is possible to increase spending and see no benefits from that investment. Indeed, this is what the U.S. as a whole has been doing for most of the past 50 years.

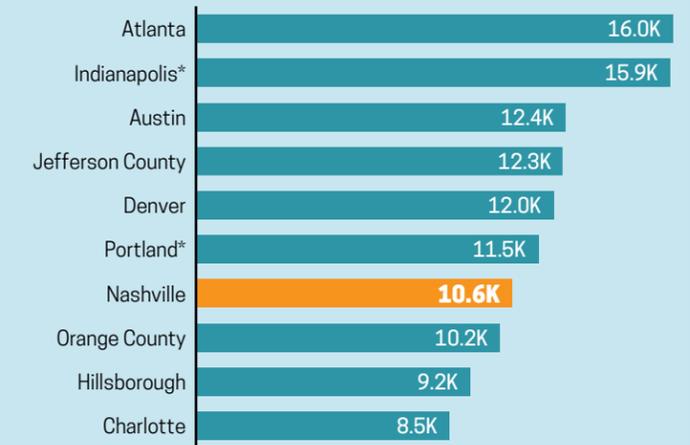
At the same time, cities (e.g., New York City under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg) and states (e.g., Massachusetts in the 1990s and 2000s) that have made dramatic progress in education often have done so with the help of rising investment in K–12. Resources grease the wheels of change, acting as accelerants to progress. And there is broad consensus that higher levels of student need require greater resources to serve effectively.

On this basis, Nashville can make the case for higher investment. Over the past 10 years, per pupil spending in the city has been nearly flat (adjusted for inflation), while the population of low-income students has increased by 13 percent and that of English language learners by 110 percent. Against our 10 benchmark cities, Nashville is sixth in total per pupil spending, and we rank 54th out of 67 urban districts in this category within the Council of the Great City Schools.<sup>30</sup> Within Tennessee, Nashville's local contribution to education is relatively strong. But when comparing Nashville to 10 other adjacent or urban counties, only Knox County receives less state funding per pupil.

Private investment also has played a large role in school-improvement efforts in many cities (e.g., Charlotte, Denver, Tampa), especially where these funds have supported a coordinated agenda. This report lauds recent progress in Memphis. It is important to note that local and national philanthropy combined to invest over \$100 million in Memphis schools over the past five years — all in support of an aligned strategy built around bolstering teacher effectiveness.

We do not suggest increased funding for Nashville as a strategy unto itself. But in support of a bold vision for change, a combination of public and private dollars can be a part of the solution.

## Nashville is near the bottom of our benchmark cities in terms of total per pupil spending on education

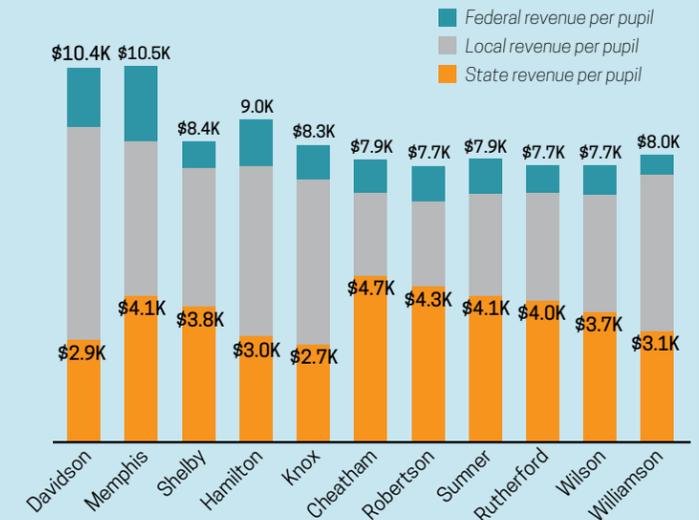


Per pupil funding, all governmental sources, SY2011–12

Note: Indianapolis and Portland data from SY2010–11

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, most recently available data; FRL and ELL Rates as of SY2014 based on TN Department of Education data

## State funding for Nashville comparatively less



Per pupil funding by source, selected TN districts, SY2012

Note: Data from SY2012. Parts of Shelby County Schools are now merged with Memphis City Schools.

Source: Tennessee Department of Education

## STRATEGY 1



### Do more to attract, develop, and retain great teachers and leaders

There is no effective strategy for Nashville that does not have at its core the teachers and principals who are closest to students. Research studies show that effective teachers influence so much more than narrow measures such as test scores; their students are more successful in life even after their years in school are complete. Effective teachers, in turn, report that the quality of the leadership in their schools is the most critical factor in their satisfaction and retention.

**\$1.4 million**



The lifetime earnings gains for a student who has an average teacher for 3 years vs. having a teacher in the bottom 5%

Source: *The Long-Term Impact of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood, 2011*

Nashville faces a critical challenge in making talent a lever for raising academic achievement. Last school year, the highest-performing clusters in MNPS had triple the share of the “highly effective” teachers (based on teacher evaluation results) in the system, compared to the lowest-performing clusters. In seeking to remedy this gap, the significant churn that MNPS faces each year is

both an opportunity and a challenge; MNPS hires approximately 850 new teachers per year (15 percent of its staff). While hiring teachers who have graduated from high-quality teacher preparation programs, such as Vanderbilt and Lipscomb, has increased, these hires still fill only a small share of the total jobs available each year. Recent external recruitment efforts (e.g., the “Turnaround Corps”) are an important sign that MNPS is focusing on combining high-quality talent with relevant experience, but remain limited in scale (100 teachers out of a total workforce of 5,000+). At the principal level, MNPS has replaced more than a third of all school leaders over the past two years, but has not consistently identified a set of truly “next-generation” leaders who are well-equipped to lead and innovate with a greater level of autonomy.<sup>31</sup>

A more ambitious and comprehensive approach to talent in all public schools is needed. But if any city is well-positioned to serve as a magnet for educator talent, it is Nashville.

#### Ideas to help pick up the pace

Nashville has made some progress. A bolder strategy might include the community considering several ideas:

- ↑ In places like Memphis that have really focused on talent, **public-private partnerships** have helped support local and national recruitment campaigns and have brought resources that make jobs more attractive. Nashville’s status as an “it city” should make it a sought-after destination for the best principal and teacher talent, if it can galvanize a citywide approach to this challenge. Where this has been done most effectively, it has been a city effort, not just a K–12 HR Department initiative.
- ↑ Instead of MNPS competing for talent with charter schools, and charters competing amongst themselves, Nashville could seek to align efforts and resources toward a **citywide talent strategy**, which could especially help to fill hard-to-staff schools and roles.
- ↑ Nashville will have to examine the incentives and structures it currently has in place that, first, encourage teachers to take on **tough assignments** and, second, encourage the best teachers to stay in classrooms through an **attractive career path** that features continued opportunities for development and professional growth. Districts like Washington, DC, and Denver have examples of compelling innovations in this area. MNPS has some smaller programs in place; what would a more ambitious effort look like?
- ↑ Both traditional higher education and alternative teacher preparation programs should be at the table and be part of the solution, seeking to **better prepare teachers** for the real-world challenges of urban classrooms.

## STRATEGY 2



### Give school leaders the full autonomy they need to dramatically improve schools

School districts wrestle with finding the right balance of autonomy vs. centralization in their management approaches. And for districts with stable levels of high performance, there may be no single right answer to this question. But for schools and districts — such as Nashville — that need a turnaround, both research and experience indicate that real autonomy for school leaders is a condition of success.<sup>32</sup>

“[School-based decision-making is] a mechanism to foster innovation and school improvement... because it gives more responsibility to the educators closest to the students.”

— Center for Collaborative Education, 2014

“Autonomy” is mentioned so often in education that its meaning can be vague, so what do we mean by the term? What matters most to successful school improvement is that school leaders have autonomy over people, time, programs, and resources. First and most critically, principals need to have the ability to choose their

own staff. They need the flexibility to make choices about how the school day will be organized, to extend learning time if needed, and to select the curriculum and instructional programs that will be the best fit for their particular students. Underlying all of this is the need for control over budgets to fund these choices.

Granting these autonomies to MNPS school leaders is a logical next step for Nashville based on the foundational moves made in recent years (public charters already have most of these freedoms). MNPS’s Innovation Cluster has begun giving principals in those schools greater flexibility over certain staffing, budgeting, and instructional decisions but not to the same degree that some others — like Shelby County (see Part 1 of this report) — have done. While there is recognition today of the need to further bolster Innovation Cluster school freedoms, MNPS should make this a greater priority and consider extending that flexibility across more schools.

Beyond the Innovation Cluster, MNPS is rolling out student-based budgeting to all schools for the 2015–16 school year. This also is a significant step forward. Done right, it will put decisionmaking in the hands of principals and teachers. That said, it will be important to see how much control schools ultimately have and whether schools have the right supports to enable good decisionmaking.

#### Ideas to help pick up the pace

Greater flexibility for school leaders can be a transformative approach when embedded in a broader strategy:

- ↑ Autonomy will not succeed if it means simply turning over the keys to an unprepared principal. School leaders who make use of their flexibility do so because they combine **a distinct vision of instruction and school culture with the resourcefulness to use all levers at their disposal** — staffing, budget, programs, and time — to implement that vision. MNPS should carefully consider how school leaders are trained and supported to take on greater autonomy, including what resources (public and private) they have at their disposal to design the right strategies for a given school.
- ↑ The central office has to become an organization focused on **supporting schools and enabling school-level innovation**. For most districts, this implies a transformation not just of structure but of mindset in *how work is done day-to-day*. Autonomous schools still need central supports, but those supports must be responsive to their individual needs rather than to top-down initiatives.
- ↑ **The flip side of autonomy is accountability;** schools need to know what is expected of them in terms of performance and progress. Recent MNPS initiatives like the Academic Performance Framework, which combines academic measures with feedback from teachers and students about the learning environment, can be a foundation.

But the existing frameworks may need to be simplified and should be accompanied with clearer communication about the stakes associated with results.

- ↑ **Nashville should reopen the conversation on where to draw the line in defining “turnaround” status or membership in the Innovation Cluster**, which combined enroll only about 4.8 percent (approximately 4,000) of Nashville’s students. However, nearly 60 percent

of public school students in the city attend a school that ranks in the bottom quartile of all schools statewide, in terms of achievement. If MNPS believes that more autonomy is an ingredient for turning around the very lowest-performing schools in the Innovation Cluster, perhaps it should extend that flexibility to a broader set of schools. Why should schools have to struggle so significantly to be granted the conditions for their improvement?

### STRATEGY 3



*Develop neighborhood-by-neighborhood strategies to give families stronger public schools in ways that recognize the needs and demands of individual communities*

**The challenge of driving dramatic improvement in Nashville’s school performance is daunting when defined in the aggregate: more than 80,000 students are spread across Nashville’s 150+ district and public charter schools, with demographics that indicate higher levels of need than in any other urban county in Tennessee.**

But if we break the challenge down into pieces at the neighborhood level, a clearer picture of varied needs emerges:

- Some communities where the diversity and richness of language and culture is a defining element of making school work; others with low rates of immigration and English language learners
- Some communities where entrenched levels of generational poverty speaks to the need for a set

of wraparound supports such as counseling and health care that go well beyond schooling; others with higher incomes or rising levels of gentrification

- Some communities where charter schools have become a substantial and important part of the educational landscape; others where charters are largely absent
- Some communities where access to magnet and private schools is taken for granted as an alternative option; others where a struggling zoned school is the only realistic choice for families

Most important, focusing on the neighborhood level carries with it the potential to tap into the energy and knowledge of parents and local leaders who are deeply invested in the success of their local schools. Indeed, no strategy for education will reach its full potential if it does not have at its roots engagement with families and partnerships with the community.

### Ideas to help pick up the pace

One size does not fit all when it comes to education in Nashville. Some thoughts to contemplate:

- ↑ Work with local school and community leaders to **get independent assessments of school options in each neighborhood**. Based on this local engagement, develop a plan for each neighborhood or cluster to create a stronger network of schools that better meet the needs of students, ensure alignment within elementary to high school feeder patterns, and provide diverse options that reflect different student needs and interests.
- ↑ **Create an environment where all kinds of schools — zoned, magnet, enhanced option, and charter — collaborate** as part of the school-improvement solution. Cities undergoing effective turnaround, like Lawrence, MA, have demonstrated the power of being sector-agnostic in their approach. Resources for facilities, transportation, and the like should be guided by considerations of which schools’ students and families are in need, not by governance or ideology.
- ↑ **Consider how private and non-profit sector resources can be used in partnership with public schools** to enrich local strategies and accelerate the rate of change. These resources can fund innovation, increase resources available to high-need areas, and offer wraparound supports (such as counseling) that address the holistic needs of students and families. Comprehensive efforts like Charlotte’s Project LIFT are showing the promise of this public-private approach.
- ↑ Look into additional ways to **break the problem down into smaller chunks beyond just geographic clustering**. For example, initiatives such as STEM Prep’s Nashville Newcomer Academy and Demonstration School are designed to create a network of schools serving high ELL populations. A similar effort outside of Nashville, the Internationals Network for Public Schools, has proven successful in other areas, such as New York City.

### STRATEGY 4



*Invest deeply in the birth-to-nine timeframe to jumpstart students’ chances of long-term success*

**Many of the challenges that Nashville’s public schools face have their roots in poverty. Research is compelling that no educational investments are more efficient or effective in combatting the effects of poverty than funding high-quality early childhood programming.**

Nashville has a solid foundation. The city has paved the way by having already made a sizable investment in preschool and creating three new model Early Learning Centers that are doing innovative work. The subsequent winning of a \$33 million, four-year federal grant will help expand and strengthen that program. In addition, local universities offer nationally recognized expertise in the field. For example, Vanderbilt/Peabody is independently evaluating Nashville’s model centers and the efficacy of expansion classrooms, made possible through the federal Pre-K grant.

Despite efforts like these, more than 1,000 children were on the MNPS Pre-K waitlist in 2014. The actual need likely is much greater.

More broadly, the truly transformative opportunity exists not only in expanding high-quality preschool options but also in broadening to create a continuum of supports from birth through age nine. Other cities, such as Providence, RI, have already launched ambitious efforts on this front, building on evidence-based programs such as the Nurse-Family Partnership that start during pregnancy. And many cities and states are focused on better aligning a disparate system of early care and education to build literacy skills from Pre-K through 3rd grade. Additional efforts to strengthen literacy and provide rapid remediation can have a powerful impact. Cities such as Tulsa and Boston have made sizable investments in a range of early childhood efforts that have paid dividends.

#### Tale of Three Clusters

*In Nashville, educational quality depends partly on where you live.*

	Antioch	Whites Creek	Hillsboro
% Low-income	80%	83%	39%
% English language learners	27%	17%	3%
% Proficient / Advanced – TCAP Reading	33%	29%	63%
Comprehensive high school average ACT score	17.3	15.2	20.0



For every **\$1** invested in public preschool for at-risk children, society gets **\$7** back: including higher high school graduation rates and lower crime rates.

Source: National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research

National studies have shown that children who do not read proficiently by 3rd grade are four times more likely not to complete high school.<sup>33</sup> They are also far more likely to have disciplinary issues in later grades. And worse, the vast majority of kids who do not read at grade level by 3rd grade never catch up. In Nashville, only 41 percent of students are meeting even Tennessee's basic

reading standards by 3rd grade. Any investments that Nashville can make to prepare its youngest students will enable those students to unlock opportunities for deeper learning and success as they grow.

### Ideas to help pick up the pace

Many building blocks for this strategy are already in place with the right level of focus:

- Bring together stakeholders in the early childhood community to develop a plan to achieve **universal access to high-quality preschool programs**. Supporting the viability and growth of high-quality programs in all sectors (e.g., MNPS' model demonstration centers and the city's NAEYC-accredited preschools) should be the focus of any plan. How many high-quality seats are needed to meet the needs of all

children? Where is quality found today? What is the range of multi-year investments that could be made so every child has access to a high-quality, affordable program?

- Explore the full range of strategies to **strengthen supports for high-need children and families starting at birth**. For example, a coordinated city-state approach could ensure that families have access to home visitation programs, high-quality affordable child care centers, and knowledge about how to support literacy in the home.
- The public library system, the United Way's "Read to Succeed" program, Books from Birth, and others already have launched **efforts to build literacy skills**. But knowing how deep the literacy gap is, particularly among low-income communities, is there a way to better connect these initiatives? Are there other efforts that should be launched?
- Link community literacy efforts with coordinated in-school instructional and intervention strategies to create **a citywide early literacy strategy** that fully incorporates the Nashville Public Library system, nonprofits, and MNPS. The result of this strategy should be a continuum of teaching and learning from early childhood through 3rd grade — including aligned standards, curriculum, learning environments, and instruction — that sets a foundation for learning and accelerates progress for every student.

persisting through college, though the dollars involved will not be well spent if those students do not ultimately earn their degrees. And frankly, if Nashville wants to ensure that its school system is well-positioned to prepare its students to fully participate in the growing economy of the city, more must be done to grow the college-going culture across the district and lend greater support to kids, families, and schools to bolster both postsecondary access and completion.



A person with a bachelor's degree vs. a person with only a high school diploma:

- Will earn **80%** more income over his/her lifetime;
- Will have a median income **37%** greater;
- Will be **31%** more likely to vote;
- Will be **25%** more likely to exercise; and
- Will be **25%** more likely to volunteer in the community.

Source: Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society

Both nationally and locally, emerging best practices provide some answers to those questions. For example, sustained individual counseling supports for students, beginning in high school and continuing through college, can have a large measurable impact on postsecondary success. Outside of Nashville, this evidence can be seen in long-term efforts such as the DC College Access Program (profiled briefly in this section) or Success Boston. Within Nashville, efforts led by the Tennessee College Access and Success Network use a similar strategy. Likewise, several local nonprofits

have strong track records in this area. The "Top Floor" program, run by the Martha O'Bryan Center and Oasis Center's College Connection, is one example. There are also several local charter schools (e.g., LEAD, KIPP) that have made these supports integral parts of their models as well.

Because of these exemplars and the broader state context, we believe that this strategy in some ways presents the "low-hanging fruit" of improvement opportunities for Nashville. The city's future demands a large increase in postsecondary completion, and with the proper resources and focus, this progress is eminently achievable.

### Ideas to help pick up the pace

A strategy to better support students through postsecondary completion could have several elements:

- Improving postsecondary completion rates for Nashville's public school students starts with measuring these rates in the first place. Other states and cities have **comprehensive reporting systems** to know which students are succeeding in college. Nashville should build these measurement systems for itself.
- Local nonprofits and charter networks like KIPP show that school systems can build these supports, but cities such as DC and Boston indicate that the nonprofit sector also can develop and sustain focus on these strategies more broadly. Bringing together elected city leadership, public school leaders, and the private and philanthropic sectors, Nashville can determine how best to **structure and coordinate an effort to support students to and through college**. In addition to specific student supports — largely in the form of college counselors and related efforts — consideration should be given to more systemic ways to bolster the college-going culture of schools writ large.
- Higher education institutions themselves have an important role to play in this strategy and an obligation to focus on the success of their students. Research increasingly indicates that higher education institutions have widely varying performance in the graduation rates of low-income and minority students.<sup>34</sup> How can local and regional universities, especially those that serve higher proportions of students requiring remediation, be brought to the table and engaged in **a collective effort to bolster student success?**

## STRATEGY 5



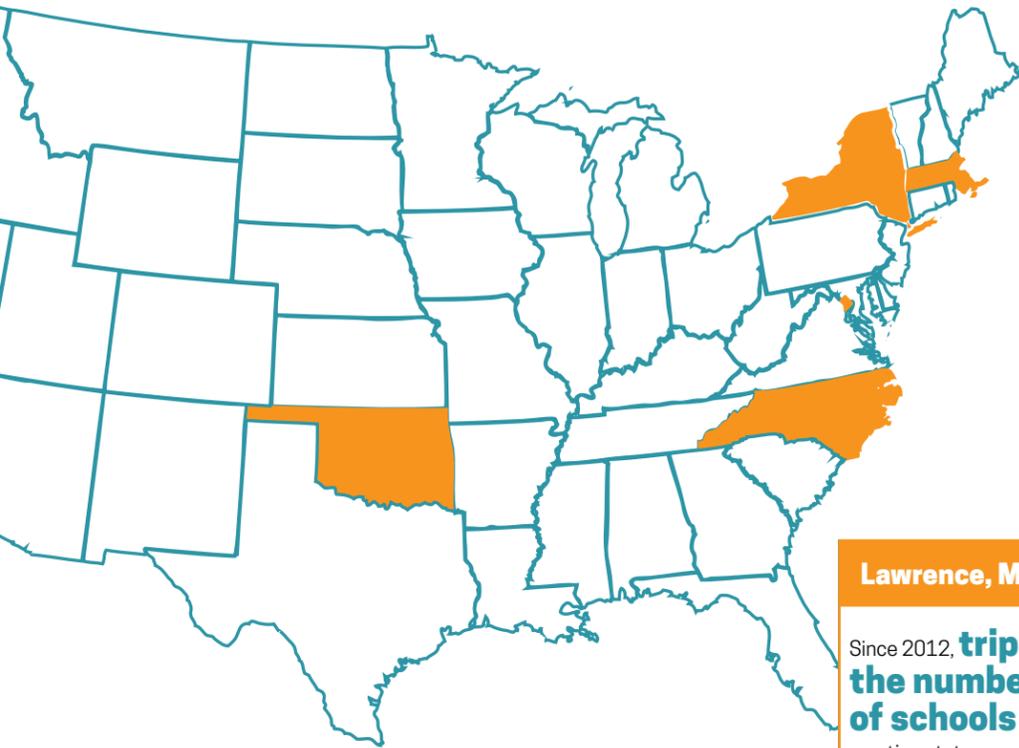
**Give students the supports required to drive college access and completion**

As Part 1 of this report shows, postsecondary completion is critical to enabling today's students to participate in the economic opportunities of Nashville's future. If Nashville were to pick one single indicator to use as a measure of its educational success, it would be the percentage of students completing some

kind of postsecondary education: from a one-year certificate to a four-year degree.

Led by Governor Haslam's Drive to 55 Alliance, Tennessee is engaged in a nationally recognized effort to improve postsecondary completion statewide. This effort will address the financial barriers that some students face in starting and

**Other cities and programs that have taken decisive action in these areas have seen breakthrough results**



**Lawrence, MA / UP Academy**

Since 2012, **tripled the number of schools** meeting state performance targets

UP Academy was the **#2 school for growth in the state**, serving the same students as before the turnaround

**Charlotte Project L.I.F.T.**

Increased the graduation rate for West Charlotte by **15% points in one year**

Attracted **more than 14 applicants per teaching job** to serve in the city's most challenged schools

**Internationals Network**

Served more than **7,000 recent immigrants** in 18 high schools across six states in SY2013

In New York City, the Internationals Network graduation rate was **26 points higher** than the city's comparable rate for English language learners

**Tulsa Early Childhood**

Previously under-served students were **10-11 months ahead in reading skills** by start of kindergarten

More than **4-to-1 long-term return on investment** from increased earnings compared to upfront costs

**DC College Access Program**

Since 1998, **more than doubled the college enrollment rate** among DC high school graduates

Nearly **tripled the college graduation rate** of college-going DC graduates

# NEXT STEPS

This report is the beginning of a broader movement to build consensus for a bold, citywide vision around education. Our hope is that the information and observations in this report will help the city come together around a shared set of goals for improving education.

We will continue to brief key leaders in government, education, business, higher education and others in the community. This enables everyone to be armed with the same factual base upon which we can have a rich conversation about next steps.

This report is the beginning, not the end of the conversation. On May 30th, the first stage of this conversation began with RESET Saturday. That day an unprecedented number of Nashvillians from neighborhoods across the city turned out to "weigh in" on priorities and share their ideas. Over the next several months, in partnership with the Nashville Public Library and other community partners, you will see interactive kiosks across the city designed to give Nashvillians an opportunity to learn more and provide feedback. There will also be listening sessions to provide a chance to ask questions or discuss details of this report in more depth.

We will also continue listening very closely to the voices of parents, teachers, principals and others through surveys, focus groups and other means.

On complex issues like education, there will always be divergent points of view. We won't all agree on everything. That's okay. But if the last few months are any indication, Nashville agrees on more than it disagrees on. Through rich conversation, an openness to new ideas and a common will to improve, we can pick up the pace and move expeditiously in the pursuit of public school excellence.

*Please join us as we take these steps forward.  
To learn more about how to get involved, visit [www.resetnashville.org](http://www.resetnashville.org).*



# ENDNOTES

1. Tennessee Department of Labor; Brookings Institute and Moody's Analytics; American Community Survey; Postsecondary degree defined as associate's degree or higher; Tennessee Department of Education; Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
2. Tennessee Higher Education Commission
3. Tennessee Department of Education, Parthenon-EY Analysis; Percentile calculated based on average proficiency in all tested subjects for elementary/middle schools (math, reading/language arts, science) and English II and Algebra I for high schools' excludes schools within each district that did not have 2014 proficiency data for those subjects
4. Bureau of Labor Statistics; MSA includes Davidson, Wilson, Rutherford, Cannon, Smith, Trousdale, Macon, Sumner, Robertson, Cheatham, Hickman, Dickson, Williamson and Maury Counties
5. Bureau of Labor Statistics; MSA includes Davidson, Wilson, Rutherford, Cannon, Smith, Trousdale, Macon, Sumner, Robertson, Cheatham, Hickman, Dickson, Williamson and Maury Counties
6. Brookings Institute and Moody's Analytics; MSA includes Davidson, Wilson, Rutherford, Cannon, Smith, Trousdale, Macon, Sumner, Robertson, Cheatham, Hickman, Dickson, Williamson and Maury Counties
7. Tennessee Department of Labor
8. Brookings Institute and Moody's Analytics; American Community Survey; Postsecondary degree defined as associate's degree or higher
9. Tennessee Department of Education; Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
10. Tennessee Department of Education; Parthenon-EY Analysis; Percentile calculated based on average proficiency in all tested subjects for elementary/middle schools (math, reading/language arts, science) and English II and Algebra I for high schools' excludes schools within each district that did not have 2014 proficiency data for those subjects
11. Tennessee Department of Education report cards
12. Data prepared by RTI International
13. Tennessee Department of Education Accountability Data
14. Tennessee Department of Education TVAAS Data
15. Tennessee Department of Education; Memphis data from SY2003 to SY2013; Only includes county school systems, not special districts such as the Franklin Special School District in Williamson County
16. "Nashville: Trends, Preferences, and Opportunities," (Nelson; 2013), prepared for the Metro Nashville government.
17. Tennessee Department of Education; Parthenon-EY Analysis; Percentile calculated based on average proficiency in all tested subjects for elementary/middle schools (math, reading/language arts, science) and English II and Algebra I for high schools' excludes schools within each district that did not have 2014 proficiency data for those subjects
18. Tennessee Department of Education; Parthenon-EY Analysis; Percentile calculated based on average proficiency in all tested subjects for elementary/middle schools (math, reading/language arts, science) and English II and Algebra I for high schools' excludes schools within each district that did not have 2014 proficiency data for those subjects
19. Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
20. Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce; Tennessee Higher Education Commission
21. Based on ACT college readiness benchmark data shown in the Nashville Chamber of Commerce Education Report (2014)
22. Tennessee Department of Education; AP offerings vary by school
23. Urban Institute, "Higher Education Earnings Premium: Value, Variation, and Trends" (Baum; 2014)
24. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2013
25. "Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society"; Voting statistic for ages 25 to 44
26. Tennessee Department of Education
27. Stanford University's CREDO "Urban Charter School Study 2015"
28. Tennessee Charter Center
29. Based on Tennessee Department of Education data; Analysis data; National Association of Public Charter Schools
30. National Center for Education Statistics, most recently available data; FRL and ELL Rates as of SY2014 based on TN Department of Education data
31. MNPS internal teacher and principal evaluation data
32. Education Resource Strategies and Center for Collaborative Education, "The Path Forward: School Autonomy and Its Implications for the Future of Boston's Public Schools," prepared for The Boston Foundation (June 2014); Education Sector, "The Road to Autonomy: Can Schools, Districts, and Central Offices Find their Way?" (2011); American Institutes for Research, "What Research and the Field Tell Us About School Leadership and Turnaround" (2010); The Wallace Foundation, "Critical Actions—The School Turnaround Field Guide" (2010)
33. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation" (January 2012)
34. UChicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, "From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College" (March 2008)

## About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) is committed to pulling together the vast intellectual, creative and financial resources of the Nashville community to create a shared vision of the city's education system and provide the resources needed to make it a reality. We undertook Project RESET in an effort to elevate the conversation around education as we approach a vital time in Nashville's history. It is designed to bring together education, civic, faith, business, parent and neighborhood leaders from across the city to develop a bold, innovative, cradle-to-career vision for success. With the partnership of many community organizations as well as a wide array of individual, local business and foundation support, we are able to bring world-class knowledge and expertise to bear alongside a rich community engagement effort.

## About Parthenon-EY's Education Practice

Parthenon has served as an advisor to the education sector since its inception in 1991. The Parthenon-EY Education practice – the first of its kind across management consulting firms – has an explicit mission and vision to be the leading strategy advisor to the global education sector. To achieve this, they invest significantly in dedicated management and team resources so that their global experience extends across public sector and nonprofit education providers, foundations, for-profit companies and service providers, and investors. Parthenon has deep experience and a track record of consistent success in working closely with universities, colleges, states, districts, and leading educational reform and service organizations across the globe.



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