

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ***College and Post-Secondary Enrollments of Metro Nashville Public Schools Graduates Hit 10-Year Low***

***Nashville Public Education Foundation's Bridge to Completion report also finds college-going equity gap greater than ever as Black and Hispanic losses double those of White and Asian students***

**NASHVILLE, TENN. – April 13, 2022** – Exploring the college-going trends for Metro Nashville Public School (MNPS) students and graduates, the Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) released its [2022 Bridge to Completion Report](#) in partnership with research partner [Tennessee College Access and Success Network](#) (TCASN). The fifth edition of the annual report, this year's findings emphasize pandemic losses and equity gaps in college-going trends in 2021. Despite its challenges, the report also highlights favorable trends in college persistence and completion rates of prior graduates. Notably, the report offers specific recommendations for city and state leaders to improve college going and completion rates, and successful student outcomes across Nashville.

“Last year’s data prepared us for continued declines in college-going for the class of 2021, but it didn’t illustrate the distinct equity disparity that this year’s report does,” said **Jennifer Hill, Vice President, Policy and Programming at the Nashville Public Education Foundation**. “It’s critical that our community use the knowledge and data we have to increase supports and implement vital changes to ensure Nashville’s students have the best chance at postsecondary attainment.”

Already in decline prior to the pandemic, the college-going rate (CGR) for graduates of Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) in 2021 fell further by 5% vs 2020 to the lowest point in more than a decade. The total pandemic loss is now estimated at 9% spanning 2020-21 data. While the overall CGR continues to show decline, losses are now more specific to Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx students (down 3% and 6% respectively from 2020). While not returning to pre-pandemic levels, White and Asian students’ CGR increased in 2021 (up 1% and 3% respectively from 2020).

“No surprise, the pandemic continues to intensify existing inequities in college access,” said **Bob Obrohta, Executive Director of the Tennessee College Access and Success Network**. “This year’s findings further illustrate the critical need for systemic changes to support education professionals and community organizations who are working tirelessly to ensure Nashville’s students and families are well-supported in attaining postsecondary education.”

The 2022 Bridge to Completion report makes two key recommendations: 1) the creation of a citywide college completion initiative and report on annual metrics of success and 2) the reform of state tuition and financial aid policies to be more inclusive and supportive of low-income students and students of color.

“As we enter the era of post-pandemic learning, it’s critical that we examine the inequities exacerbated since March of 2020,” said Hill. “The losses experienced during the pandemic will continue to impact our schools and students so we must actively address the barriers to attainment for low-income students and students of color so that ALL Nashville’s students can thrive in school and pursue their postsecondary aspirations.”

The [Bridge to Completion report](#) is conducted in collaboration with MNPS and analyzes National Student Clearinghouse data on MNPS graduates from the last seven years as well as data from interviews with college and career professionals. As such, the 2022 Bridge to Completion report finds favorable trends in college persistence and completion, with 4-year college persistence holding from 2018 and college completion holding from the previous year, maintaining, or increasing for the fourth consecutive year. Positively, college completion has either increased or remained consistent over the last five years and is consistent with the national average for similar districts.

NPEF regularly convenes stakeholders to advocate for data-driven solutions in public education. In addition to college access and success, NPEF addresses topics such as education funding, the importance of effective principals and leaders, teacher recruitment and retention, and the conditions that must be present in schools for children to thrive.

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#### **About the Nashville Public Education Foundation**

The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to remove barriers for students by promoting excellence, serving as a critical friend to Metro Nashville Public Schools, convening stakeholders, and advocating for change so all students can thrive in school. More information is available at [nashvillepef.org](http://nashvillepef.org).

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