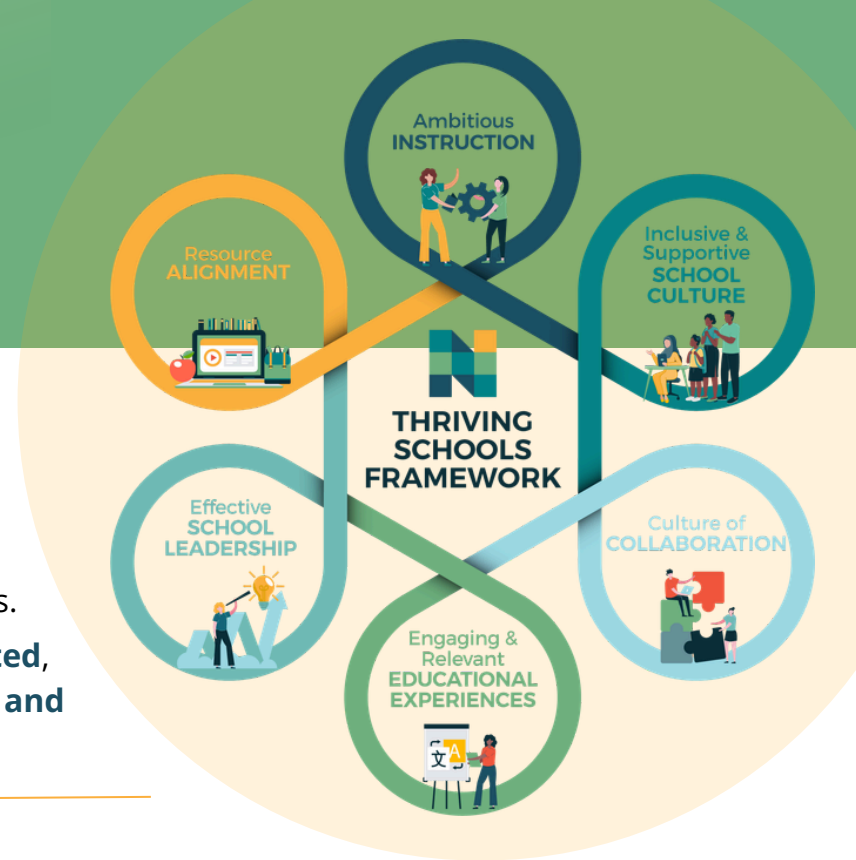


THRIVING SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

We believe the ability to thrive exists within each of our schools.

At the Nashville Public Education Foundation, we believe **the conversation about school success needs to be broadened** – that academic achievement and growth, though critically important, do not by themselves represent what we all want for our students.

We also want our students to be **inspired and motivated**, to be **socially and civically engaged**, and to be **happy and confident learners**.



What is the Thriving Schools Framework?

The Nashville Public Education Foundation's Thriving Schools Framework is a research-based framework that **identifies six conditions present in schools where all students thrive**: Ambitious Instruction, an Inclusive and Supportive School Culture, Engaging and Relevant Educational Experiences, a Culture of Collaboration, Effective School Leadership, and Resource Alignment.

The framework is not intended to be prescriptive toward schools, or to act as a rating system; there is no single formula for a thriving school, and **schools find many right ways to build these conditions**. Rather, the framework offers language, concepts, and goals that educators, families, city leaders, and community members can share and use to talk about what's working, what's possible, and what we're working toward together.

Tracking progress toward thriving schools outcomes can help us celebrate wins, scale positive outcomes, and design data-driven solutions.

Broadening the conversation on school success to include school culture, student experience, leadership, and the conditions adults work in gives a **fuller and fairer picture** of every school, and **helps the whole community see where to invest, partner, and celebrate**. These conditions and the metrics that track their presence are not only goals themselves, but are **important leading indicators** of academic achievement and growth and student agency and engagement. NPEF's Thriving Schools dashboard shares data aligned to the six conditions that help illustrate **a more holistic picture of how schools are helping students thrive**.

The Thriving Schools conditions do not happen in isolation.

The six conditions are not a hierarchy, and there is no set order in which they must fall into place. Rather, they are **deeply intertwined, each one strengthening the others**. When a leader sets a **strong instructional vision** and **protects time for teachers** to work alongside one another, a Culture of Collaboration and Ambitious Instruction can flourish together. When teachers make Engaging and Relevant Educational Experiences a daily priority, **instruction gets stronger and students' sense of belonging grows**. When students **feel safe and know they belong**, they take the academic risks that ambitious teaching asks of them. And when budgets, staffing, resources, partnerships, and time are **aligned behind a school's vision, all of it becomes sustainable**. Importantly, how this work takes shape will look different from school to school. It depends on the people in the building, their expertise, what students and families need, and how communities grow and change.



"Thriving schools are the result of collaborative efforts—where educators, families, and community members work together with a shared vision."
- MNPS principal

We asked teachers and leaders how the Thriving Schools Framework plays out in our public schools.

In order to ground the Thriving Schools Framework in practitioner wisdom, NPEF conducted qualitative research in the spring of 2026, hosting 14 focus groups with **more than 50 teachers, school counselors, instructional coaches, and school leaders** across Metro Nashville Public Schools. We asked those closest to students what it takes for a school to thrive and **how each of the six conditions show up in practice** in classrooms, hallways, team meetings, and relationships with families and community partners. These conversations informed a set of resources that explore how each condition is cultivated and observed.

"I believe that inclusivity and teaching go hand in hand. Every child has the ability to learn, and it is my responsibility to ensure they have the opportunity to do so. I became a teacher to educate ALL children. In my classroom, students are valued for who they are and are supported so they can focus on what truly matters: learning."
- MNPS educator

Outside-of-school factors play a significant role in students' ability to thrive.

Schools don't determine student success alone. Affordable housing, transportation, family economic stability, state policy, and district budgets all shape how students are able to show up to school and what schools are equipped to do. The people who influence these factors — policymakers, city and district leaders, employers, business leaders, community organizations — have the opportunity to **remove barriers so that more students can thrive** in school each day. This takes **aligning both school-based and citywide efforts and priorities** toward a more holistic view of success and collectively examining what it will take to get there.

Explore Data aligned to the Framework:

[THRIVING SCHOOLS DASHBOARD](#)

Explore each Thriving Schools Condition:

[INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE](#) | [RESOURCE ALIGNMENT](#) | [EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP](#)
[AMBITION INSTRUCTION](#) | [ENGAGING AND RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES](#) | [CULTURE OF COLLABORATION](#)