

EDUCATION



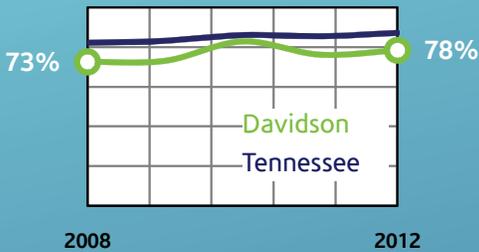
DID YOU KNOW?

- » In a survey of residents, education ranked as the top priority facing Nashville.
- » Over 72% of Nashville public school students are economically disadvantaged, and the number has risen steadily since the 1990s.



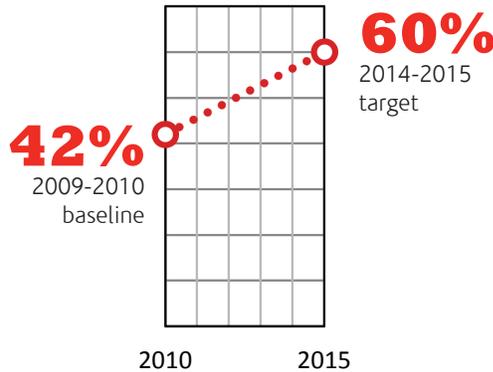
- » Meanwhile, 14 of Nashville's 133 public schools have low-poverty student bodies (fewer than 25% eligible for free or reduced lunches).

- » Graduation rates have improved, but linger below the state average.



- » 1 in 4 Nashville students attends a private school.
- » Each year, 1 in 10 Nashville public school students leaves the system to attend a private school or a public school in another county.
- » In 2012, 29% of Nashville public school students achieved "all subject" readiness for college, higher than the state average of 24%.

Proficiency in 3rd grade reading one key to future success in school



"Up until the end of third grade, most children are **learning to read**. Beginning in fourth grade, however, they are **reading to learn**, using their skills to learn more and to solve problems."

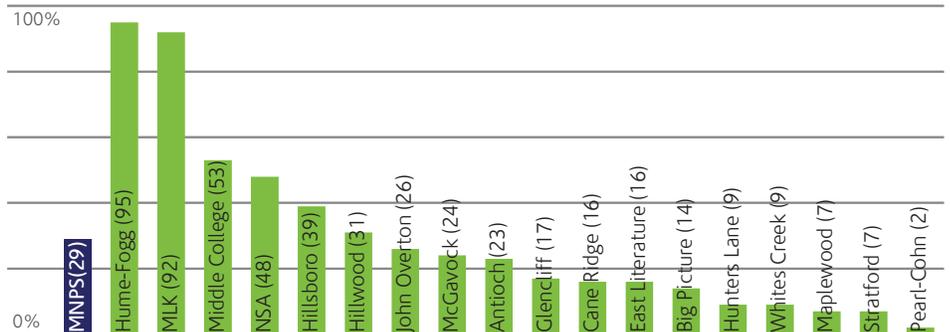
—Annie E. Casey Foundation

"A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by [third grade] is unlikely to graduate from high school."

—National Research Council

21 on the ACT

Percentage of students at each Nashville Public High School achieving this indicator of success at college (2012)



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Meeting Nashville's Public Education Challenges

The Education Background Report highlights challenges facing the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. Despite recent gains, numerous external evaluations indicate the need for more dramatic growth and accelerated change in the structure and culture of MNPS to achieve better educational outcomes. For example, according to an assessment by the Tribal ISP Progress Report (2012, 10), 1 out of 3 elementary and middle school students meet grade level standards in math and 2 out of 5 elementary and middle school students meet grade level standards in reading.

Graduation rates have improved significantly, but efforts to improve the preparation of students for college and career have lagged. For example, the district-wide average for obtaining a score of 21 on the ACT exam, an indicator of student preparedness to succeed in college, is only 29%.

The report explores the district's ongoing initiatives, including improving organizational structures, district priorities, and management processes. It also discusses the impact of these efforts on student outcomes. These efforts include:

- » A systematic approach to serving middle grades youth in high-quality after-school programming through the Nashville After-School Zones Alliance (NAZA). One example is the YMCA's Fun Company before- and after-school program.
- » Better starting teacher pay.
- » Creation of the first district office committed to charter schools and more recently to innovative school structures or themes such as magnet schools.

The report recommends program and policy changes for school improvement that are anchored to four policy values: excellence, equity, efficiency, and diversity. The report:

- » Underscores an array of student assignment, school choice, and housing strategies designed to address issues of socio-economic diversity in Nashville's public schools.
- » Places a special emphasis on a "public branding" communications strategy.
- » Emphasizes creating a defined portfolio strategy for the city, in which the school district acts as a performance manager, overseeing independent school leaders by using sophisticated performance tracking and communication systems, while increasing options for students and their families.