



ACT STRATEGIC PLAN

A pre-K – 12 plan to double the number of students scoring a 21 by 2025.



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Metro Nashville Public Schools students come from many diverse backgrounds with different dreams and goals. Some may be college-bound or headed straight into careers while others hope to enlist in the armed forces. Regardless of their path, we know all students must take the ACT to graduate, and their scores are often part of the measurement of educational success.

As educators and mentors of tomorrow's future workforce, it is our shared responsibility to make sure MNPS' graduates are ready for their next chapter, which includes doing well on the ACT. Unfortunately, district-wide, many of our students are not yet reaching a composite of 21 or above.

While an ACT score does not define a student's potential, a score of 21 and above does open doors to increased opportunities. A composite score of 21 or higher is an indicator that students can not only solve complex problems and communicate effectively, but that they are prepared for the rigor of postsecondary studies and the workforce. Furthermore, it unlocks more scholarship potential at two- and four-year colleges and universities.

This ACT Strategic Plan is designed to help students reach a minimum score of 21 on the ACT. It represents months of cross-functional work with teachers, principals, community partners and district administrators who carefully examined our current numbers, analyzed that data and put a strategy in place for improvement. Successfully preparing students for college and career doesn't begin in high school. This plan outlines a path, starting in prekindergarten and progressing through 12th grade, to make sure at every grade level our actions are advancing and supporting students. It examines what is needed – from the materials and training we provide teachers, to engaging our students and their families, to leveraging the resources and skills of our community partners.

I appreciate the members of this task force who developed this plan. I look forward to seeing more of our students reach this important measure as we put this plan into action.

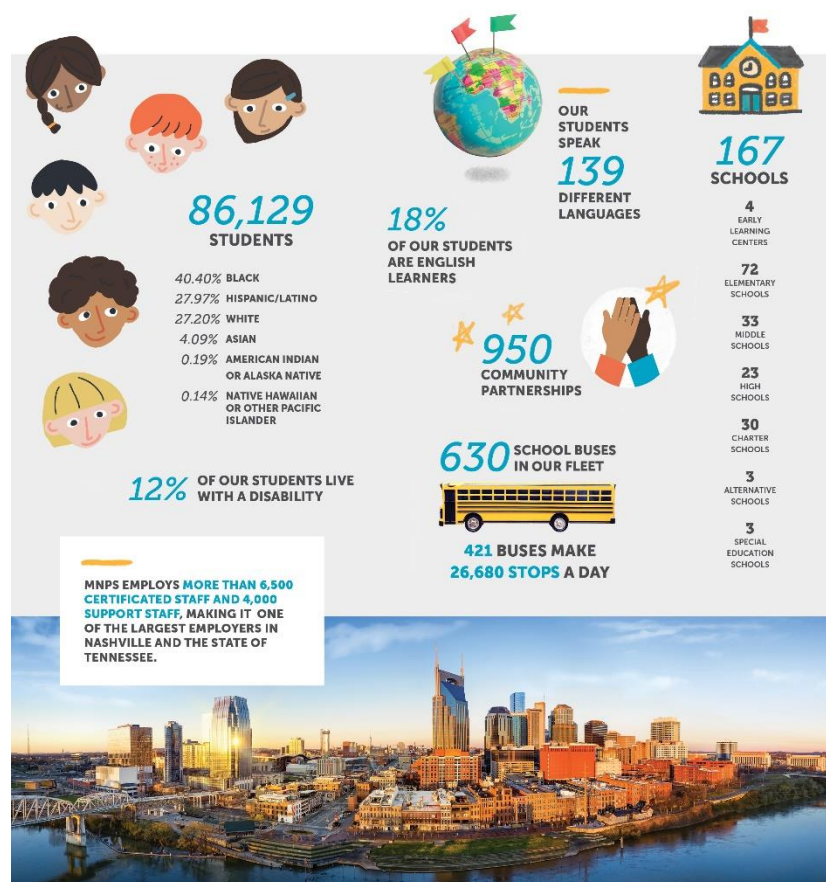
DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE

Interim Director of Schools

DISTRICT AT-A-GLANCE

Metro Nashville Public Schools is a diverse, vibrant school district that strives for excellence throughout the entire system. **We are driven by a simple mission: “to deliver a great public education to every student, every day.”**

We know every student is unique with different needs, and we cater to students at all levels. Metro Schools students receive a well-rounded education with a diversity of programming that includes arts, music and special academic programs, and pays special attention to social and emotional well-being.



POINTS OF PRIDE

- > Eighty-one percent of MNPS students graduate from high school.
- > MNPS provides more school and academic program choices to families than most other school districts in the nation.
- > Dual enrollment and Early College High School and other rigorous advanced academics, including advance placement and international baccalaureate programming, give students the opportunity to earn college credit while completing high school graduation credits.
- > Extensive support systems linking families to the resources and tools they need to be effective partners in supporting the academic success of their child(ren).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Call to Action

A fundamental goal that guides the work of Metro Nashville Public Schools is to prepare graduates with the opportunity to pursue their interests from the widest possible set of options. Our students should be ready to face challenges with confidence and skill while being prepared to take advantage of any available opportunity. This preparation includes rigorous academic learning, social and emotional maturity, and an understanding of how decisions they make have long-lasting impact on their lives.

ACT test scores “reflect what students have learned throughout high school and provide colleges and universities with excellent information for recruiting, advising, placement, and retention.”¹ By this definition, the ACT score is a good indication of a student’s readiness for postsecondary education. The Tennessee State Academic Standards outline a pre-K – 12 roadmap of content and skills necessary for students to become college and career ready by the time they graduate. It is critical that all students learn the content to meet these standards in preparation for success on the ACT.

We want students to score well on the ACT test taken in 11th grade and we recognize their score represents all work and learning they have completed until that point. Every educational experience along the way matters and student success is shared by each person responsible for providing these experiences. Therefore, our students’ success on the ACT must be shared by all educators – all tiers, all grades, and all leaders – throughout MNPS.

A strong ACT score:

- increases the likelihood of college acceptance,
- opens the door to more college options, and
- increases students’ chances of completing their degree.

Moreover, a strong ACT score comes with greater scholarship opportunities which save students and their families’ money. Specifically, a composite score of 21 on the ACT is a minimum qualification for the Tennessee HOPE Scholarship, which can save families up to \$16,000 at a four-year college or university². Higher scores can translate to even more cost savings at many postsecondary institutions across the country.

A composite score of 21 on the ACT is the *minimum* benchmark toward which we aspire for every student in MNPS. As the below results show, there has been a significant increase over the past two years in the number of graduates tested and the number scoring 21 or above. The number of students tested has increased by 487 since 2016 and the number

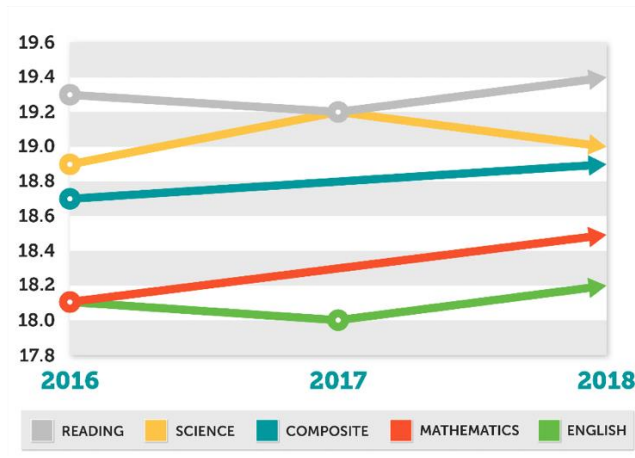
¹ <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act-educator.html>

² <https://www.tn.gov/collegepays/money-for-college/tn-education-lottery-programs/tennessee-hope-scholarship.html>

scoring 21 or higher has increased by 195 over that time. There has been a slow but steady increase since 2016 in the percentage of students scoring 21 or above on the composite and in the composite average. The percent scoring at least 21 improved by one point and the average increased by 0.2 over the past two years.

	2016	2017	2018
# OF GRADUATES	4,394	4,412	4,605
# OF TESTED	3,865	4,175	4,352
TEST PARTICIPATION RATE	88%	95%	95%
# 21 OR HIGHER (COMPOSITE)	1,209	1,297	1,404
% 21 OR HIGHER (COMPOSITE)	31.3%	31.1%	32.3%
COMPOSITE AVERAGE	18.7	18.8	18.9

The following table shows district average scores from 2016 to 2018 by ACT subject. Final (post-appeal) results are shown for 2017.



The results above show an average increase of 0.2 per year since 2016 for mathematics. English and reading scores declined by 0.1 from 2016-17 but increased by 0.2 in 2018. Science scores, on the other hand, declined by 0.2 from 2017-18 after a 0.3 increase in 2017.

While the data above indicate a positive direction for our students, for all students to achieve a 21 composite will require a great deal of concentrated effort from teachers, staff, parents, and students.

While a good ACT score is undoubtedly a key to unlock doors to opportunity, it is one key of many. A single score will never define a student's abilities, talents, or potential.

However, a student with the ability to read, write and think critically, who is socially and emotionally mature, can express thoughts in a clear manner, and is equipped with a minimum of a 21 composite on the ACT, is prepared to be successful in any endeavor.

Planning Phases



PHASE 1 | GATHER INPUT AND INFORMATION

In January 2019, then community superintendent and current interim director of schools Dr. Adrienne Battle hosted a forum with a diverse group of 50 stakeholders (including teachers, principals, and community members) from across the district. Collectively, the group outlined the ideal state of ACT achievement in MNPS. The ACT task force was formed from this group who began the process of crafting the strategic framework to align the ACT focus for pre-K – 12.

PHASE 2 | STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Using data and information gathered from Phase I, the task force formed subcommittees that reflected the scope of work. Members of the ACT task force collaborated to determine goals, major strategies, and high-level actions needed to achieve the goals.

PHASE 3 | PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Moving forward to implementation, the district will examine current organizational structures and initiatives to ensure alignment and focus needed to achieve the goals stated in the ACT strategic plan. We will revise or create new systems and protocols as needed to facilitate progress. Metro Schools will evaluate data on a continuous basis so adjustments and refinements can be made as needed.

Theory of action

If we develop a pre-K – 12 culture for all students focused on the integration of Tennessee State Academic and ACT standards using data to improve instructional practices, our students will be college and career ready as defined by the ACT benchmarks.

Goals Summary



CULTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Goal 1 | Create a pre-K – 12 culture of collaboration and shared accountability where students are supported, encouraged and challenged to be personally invested in their success on the ACT.



DATA AND RESEARCH

Goal 1 | Train school staff in utilizing ACT scores and projections to make decisions that are focused on achieving goals and growth.

Goal 2 | Support students and families in understanding ACT scores and projections and what they mean for the student.

Goal 3 | Support the strategic plan in utilizing ACT scores and projections and relevant research for data informed decision making.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTION

Goal 1 | Provide rigorous ACT-aligned curricular materials for teachers at all tiers and across content-areas.

Goal 2 | Build educator capacity to ensure delivery of rigorous instruction that reflects ACT-like demands on student thinking.

Goal 3 | Establish district-wide communication structures to ensure implementation of rigorous ACT-aligned instruction.

COMMITTEE WORK

These strategies and high-level actions support the strategies associated with each goal area.



Culture and Communications

Goal: *Create a pre-K – 12 culture of collaboration and shared accountability where students are supported, encouraged and challenged to be personally invested in their success on the ACT.*

Strategy 1 | Align, expand and strengthen the pre-K – 12 culture of collaboration and shared accountability for ACT success.

- > Communicate and educate employees regarding the pre-K – 12 ACT vertical alignment.
- > Educate staff about alignment of district and state initiatives to improve ACT success so they understand and can communicate with families and students.

Strategy 2 | Inform and educate family members regarding the purpose and importance of the ACT, as well as how to support achievement.

- > Provide ACT communication toolkit template for school usage.
- > Provide equitable communication to pre-K – 12 students and families regarding the importance of ACT.
- > Communicate specific pre-K – 12 milestones for strengthening and developing ACT culture.

Strategy 3 | Actively engage the community and business partners in initiatives at the school and district level that demonstrate college and career readiness.

- > Align and communicate college and career readiness skills essential to developing and expanding the available workforce in the greater Nashville area.
- > Identify strategies for community and business partners to effectively engage with schools, pre-K – 12, to communicate the importance of the ACT.
- > Engage community and business partners in identifying potential areas for investment in district ACT initiatives.



Data and Research

Goal 1: Support schools in utilizing ACT scores and projections to make decisions that are goal-oriented and growth-minded.

Strategy 1 | Integrate results from multiple assessments with other academic and non-academic data for more comprehensive and accurate reporting.

- > Investigate the relationship between assessment results (e.g., FAST, MAP, TCAP, TVAAS projections), grades, attendance and discipline data at various grade levels.
- > Determine the combination/weighting of student measures that best predicts future ACT performance.

Strategy 2 | Develop grade level and individual student level performance targets for ACT projections and the ACT exam.

- > Utilize state Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) methodology initially to establish one-year targets for ACT composite projections to a 21 in grades 3-10 and ACT composite scores of 21+ in grade 11.
- > Establish aggressive but realistic student level TCAP targets that provide a trajectory to a successful (e.g., 21+) 11th grade ACT composite score.
- > Establish mid-year targets for the MAP assessment that align with the end-of-year ACT trajectory target for TCAP.
- > Utilize the individual student level targets to compute school level targets for each grade level (eventually replacing the AMO approach).

Strategy 3 | Provide schools with informative graphics that communicate ACT readiness and performance.

- > Provide elementary and middle schools with ACT projections summary data and performance targets by grade and subgroup.
- > Provide high schools with ACT results, projections and performance targets by academy, grade and subgroup.
- > Integrate ACT projections and scores into grant-funded reporting to assist counselors in identifying whether students are on track for high school graduation and college and career readiness.
- > Develop a comprehensive student level report that includes attendance and discipline data, longitudinal data from various assessments, projections to the ACT, and annual assessment performance targets on a trajectory to ACT success.

Strategy 4 | Provide professional development and resources to assist educators in utilizing ACT scores and projections.

- > Develop guides to assist in the interpretation and use of various ACT reports, including tips for data conversations with students and parents.
- > Work with curriculum and instruction and other committees to tie performance data to specific interventions and other instructional practices.
- > Provide MNPS educators with face-to-face training and online professional development resources.

Goal 2: Support students and families in understanding and utilizing ACT scores and projections.

Strategy 2.1 | Provide students and parents with regular updates regarding student ACT preparation or performance.

- > Develop a parent friendly student level report that includes attendance and discipline data, longitudinal assessment data, projections to the ACT, and annual assessment performance targets on a trajectory to ACT success.
- > Develop a parent-friendly interpretation guide to assist in understanding their child's report and have it translated in multiple languages.
- > Develop a plan for the distribution of the student report and interpretation guide on at least an annual basis that may include mailing home, sending home with students, providing at parent conferences and/or posting in the parent portal.

Strategy 2.2 | Develop materials that illustrate to parents and students the importance of ACT scores.

- > Work with Communications and other committees to disseminate information pertaining to the relationship between ACT scores and scholarship opportunities and postsecondary success.

Goal 3: Support the strategic plan in utilizing ACT scores and projections and relevant research for data informed decision making.

Strategy 3.1 | Provide information needed by other task force committees to accomplish their goals.

- > Respond to data and research requests of other committees in a timely fashion.
- > Proactively review the literature for research and best practices in the use of ACT data and share relevant information with the task force.
- > Routinely update the task force with district and school level ACT and ACT projections results.
- > Assist committees in efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of key strategies or action steps.
- > Assist committees in identifying best practices in use of data and/or ACT preparation (e.g., interview students beating the odds in ACT scores relative to prior projections in effort to identify effective practices).



Professional Development and Instruction

Goal 1: Provide rigorous ACT-aligned curricular materials for teachers at all tiers and across content-areas.

Strategy 1 | Clarify alignment between ACT standards, Tennessee standards, and core curricular materials.

- > Create an ACT tab on the curriculum and instruction website (www.ci.mnps.org) with links to related documents, practice questions, and general ACT information.
- > Make explicit connections to ACT standards on the MNPS Scope and Sequence documents.

Strategy 2 | Consider rigor, strength and ACT support in adopted/purchased materials and texts.

- > Include criteria for ACT alignment and support in relevant content areas on the screening instruments.

Strategy 3 | Provide teachers with support in making authentic connections between other courses, ACT action-planning and goal setting.

- > Integrate literacy into core courses, as appropriate, to support instruction in root-words, prefix, suffix, academic vocabulary use, etc.
- > Review and revise freshman seminar to ensure inclusion of ACT-centric test-taking skills, reflection, goals, planning for HS and post-secondary aspirations.

Strategy 4 | Expose all students to test items that reflect ACT-like demands on student thinking in all courses.

- > Include sample ACT items on the scope and sequence documents for all relevant content areas aligned to particular unit topics.
- > Identify and share resources with ACT-like test items that teachers can include as part of their normal assessments.

Goal 2: Build educator skills to ensure delivery of rigorous instruction that reflects ACT-like demands on student thinking, pre-K – 12.

Strategy 2.1 | Ensure academic professional development makes explicit connections to the ACT and how rigorous tier I instruction supports students in ACT success.

- > Incorporate strategies for teaching rigorous content at the conceptual level into PD.

Strategy 2.2 | Create ready-to-use professional development modules for use at the school-level that include information about the ACT/Tennessee state standards crosswalk.

- > Assist with development and facilitation of network professional development focused on ACT skills and rigor on stockpiled professional development days.

- > Provide opportunities for all teachers to become familiar with the design and scoring of the ACT.

Strategy 2.3 | Utilize the school's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) lead as an ACT representative who can share strategies, successes, and challenges at quarterly MTSS meetings.

- > Create a process to gather and share information about what schools are doing to support ACT success so other schools can replicate strategies that are producing results.

Strategy 2.4 | Provide guidance on how to use data and other resources to make intentional decisions for student progress toward college and career readiness.

- > Incorporate data analysis strategies and best practices into existing meeting structures, such as curriculum and instruction update meetings, quadrant and network meetings, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) leadership meetings and into the new ACT Academy.
- > Provide clarity around what is consistent in every school and which decisions with ACT-support schools will make independently.

Strategy 2.5 | Ensure all ACT-prep courses are taught by qualified teachers who have been trained in the utilization of the materials.

- > Schedule professional development for ACT-prep course teachers over the summer with on-going support via the ACT Academy meetings and an online community for cross-school networking.

Goal 3: Establish district-wide structures to ensure implementation of rigorous ACT-aligned instruction.

Strategy 3.1 | Clearly define expectations for each tier on how to support ACT-readiness.

- > Identify knowledge and skill outcomes at each tier as a roadmap necessary for ACT success.

Strategy 3.2 | Ensure all elementary mastery schedules reflect the opportunity for students to meaningfully learn in all content areas.

- > Ensure all elementary school mastery schedules include all content areas for the recommended lengths.
- > Ensure ACT-prep courses are scheduled appropriately in each high school (not during personal learning time.)

Strategy 3.3 | Ensure team meetings and data talks include factors that align to college and career readiness/ACT success at all tiers.

- > Include ACT scores as part of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Data Dashboard.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

ACT Academy | <https://academy.act.org>

- > A free online learning test practice program designed for students, parents and teachers

ACT Connections | <http://bit.ly/ACTconnections>

- > A starting point for school districts, schools and teachers for aligning instruction across content areas and grade levels to support student success on TNReady and the ACT

ACT Webinars for Students and Parents | www.mnps.org/ACT

- > Videos on boosting self-confidence with testing and preparing for the ACT.

Free Practice ACT Test | <http://bit.ly/mnpsACTpracticetest>

- > A free test with practice questions (and answers).

Khan Academy and ACT Prep | <http://bit.ly/ACTkhanacademy>

- > A library of videos and resources about the ACT and how to prepare for the test.

MNPS | www.mnps.org/act

GLOSSARY

Composite Score

- > The average of all four subjects: math, science, English and reading.

College and Career Ready Benchmarks

- > The benchmarks for each subscore that indicates college/career readiness:
- > English: 18
- > Math: 22
- > Reading: 22
- > Science: 23

HOPE Scholarship

- > A composite score of 21 on the ACT is a minimum qualification for the HOPE Scholarship, which can save families up to \$16,000 at a four-year college or university.
- > The HOPE Scholarship is established and funded from the net proceeds of the Tennessee state lottery and awarded to entering freshmen who are enrolled at an eligible postsecondary institution within sixteen (16) months after graduating from a Tennessee eligible high school.

FAFSA

- > The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a form completed by current and prospective college students (undergraduate and graduate) in the United States to determine their eligibility for student financial aid.
- > The FAFSA is the application for the HOPE Scholarship, Tennessee's lottery-funded scholarship.

FAST

- > Formative Assessment for Teachers

MAP

- > Measures of Academic Progress

TCAP

- > Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Progress

TVAAS

- > Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System



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