

# Forward**FOCUS**

*A News Bulletin For Employees Of Metro Nashville Public Schools*

IN THIS ISSUE: 100 DAY PLAN UPDATE • FIRST OUT-OF-THE-BOX AWARD GOES TO... • CELEBRATING CITIZENSHIP



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Dr. Shawn Joseph*

*"The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love."  
— William Wordsworth*

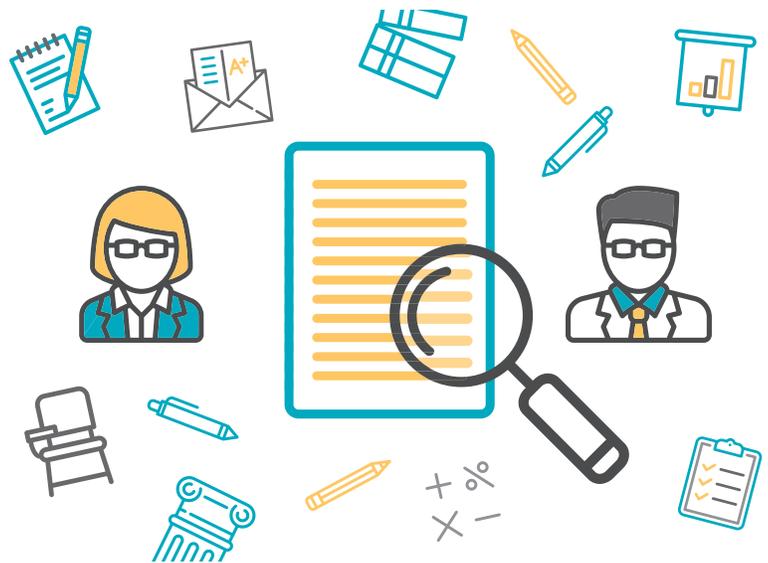
Do you know that something amazing happens inside of you when you demonstrate kindness by giving time, energies, and efforts to support others? As we embark on a new way of doing business in our district, we want to emphasize that we value you as individuals. We want to help you achieve both your personal and our organizational goals. How we work with one another matters, so we want to be intentional about establishing kind and respectful interactions.

Your kindness toward others and your thoughtfulness of each other's humanity will be impactful and transformative. Kindness can only be expressed when it has been experienced. Give the gift of kindness to someone else to teach him or her how to pass it on. Kindness is best expressed when it is least deserved. Show it most when people's actions seem undeserving. Kindness is not complete until it is expressed. Holding it for yourself will not improve our district.

Sustainable change occurs as people focus on their own self-reflective journeys and willingly give to others. Challenge yourself to show kindness by encouraging a colleague daily. It will make our district a better place. The greatest leaders demonstrate the ability to follow and support others. I hope this week's video reminds you of the power of followers.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW8amMCVAJQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW8amMCVAJQ)

## FEATURE STORY



## THE FUTURE OF ASSESSMENTS

### *Understanding the Teacher Survey Results*

*"The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both respond to the information it provides. Assessment for learning is an ongoing process that arises out of the interaction between teaching and learning." (ASCD, 2010).*

In August, teachers were asked to provide feedback on our national, state and district assessments to guide future plans for the Metro Schools testing schedule. The goal of new district leadership is to ensure that the time and effort teachers and students invest in assessments is worth the benefit it provides in improving teachers' instruction and students' learning.

The results from the teacher survey were recently collected, analyzed and summarized by the Research, Assessment and Evaluation Department and shared with leadership and principals at the Administration & Supervisory (A & S) meeting on Oct. 12. The results were presented at the A & S meeting so that principals could better understand teachers' views on testing and use that information to find the best ways to support their teachers' work.

A total of 1,355 teachers responded with a good representation across all tiers — 751 from elementary

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schools, 305 from middle preps and 299 from high schools. The respondents provided feedback on eight assessments with four different categories: test preparation and administration, use of test results, timeliness of results and overall value.

Dr. Paul Changas, Executive Director of Research, Assessment and Evaluation, explained that based on the survey results, the assessments requiring the most test preparation and administration are Text Level Assessments (TLAs) and the TCAP Achievement assessment. Despite the heavy investment of time and effort, Dr. Changas explained that TLAs had the most favorable response and that the time spent is “definitely warranted” according to the majority of elementary school teachers. The ACT exam and WIDA access were

the remaining two assessments that respondents described as “definitely warranted.”

In terms of using the data from each assessment to impact instruction, Dr. Changas explained that information gleaned from TLAs is most heavily used, with 74 percent of teachers responding “often.” The results of TLAs were also used to document academic progress, identify students in needs of interventions and to measure the effectiveness of instruction.

This valuable teacher input is directly influencing the decisions of district leaders. The insights from the teacher survey are being used to make real-time adjustments to the assessment tools used by the district. More information about these changes will be shared in the coming weeks.

**THE NUMBERS**

- 5 clear goals
- 56 individual action items to address five core areas of need
  - » 33 are complete
  - » 23 still in progress

**KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND CURRENT PROJECTS:**

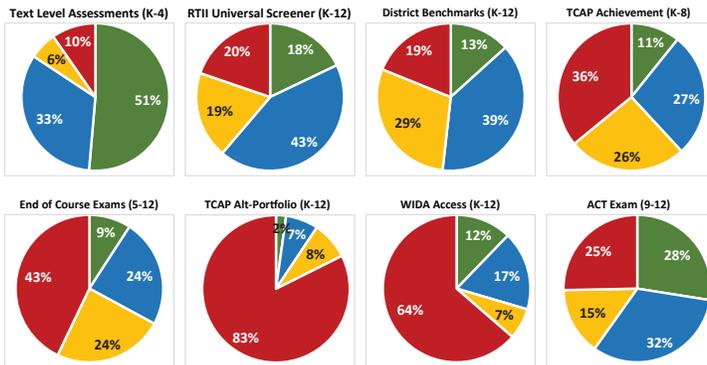
- Dr. Joseph and the Board continue to work on building a governance model that will support a positive culture focused on student outcomes.
- The most recent Board retreat involved creating new structures around Board committees, agenda setting and ongoing performance monitoring.
- The Transition Team is developing a report of recommendations and have presented preliminary findings to Dr. Joseph.
- The Transition Team’s research has been extensive – looking at both existing district initiatives and best practices from around the country.
- Based on his school visits, it is clear to Dr. Joseph that principals and teachers are hungry for a clear academic vision. That work is ongoing with Chief Academic Officer Dr. Monique Felder and her team.
- Dr. Joseph continues to meet with local community, religious and business leaders. The dedication to public education across Nashville is clearly apparent, and the community is also hungry for a vision they can support.
- For the budget, Dr. Joseph and Chief Operating Officer Chris Henson have formed an internal committee in partnership with Metro Government to conduct a deep dive analysis of district spending. The work will include reviewing long-standing vendor contracts.
- The budget analysis will set the stage for future budget planning to be aligned with new strategic priorities, which will come from the Transition Team’s work as well as the community and staff input Dr. Joseph and his team are working diligently to gather.

**TEACHER ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

Over 1300 teachers – 751 elementary, 305 middle, and 299 high school – responded to the survey.

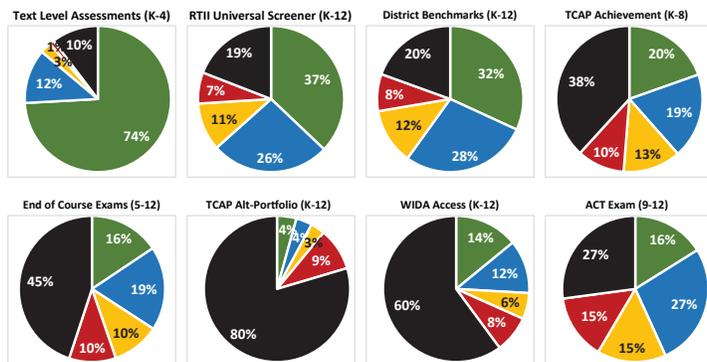
**Is the time spent preparing for and administering each assessment warranted by its contribution to teaching and learning?**

Definitely warranted (Green) | Somewhat warranted (Blue) | Not warranted (Yellow) | N/A (Red)



**How often do you use the data from each assessment below to improve teaching and learning?**

Often (Green) | Sometimes (Blue) | Rarely (Yellow) | Never (Red) | N/A (Black)





Laxmi Nepal (right) with her daughter, Mauju Rai, also an MNPS employee.

## CULTURAL CROSSROADS

*Celebrating heritage and U.S. citizenship*

Laxmi Nepal has worked at the MNPS Central Office in Custodial Services for six years — almost the same amount of time she's lived in the U.S. In May 2009, Laxmi arrived in New Jersey after tensions in Nepal forced her to leave. That was her third big move in her lifetime. In the 1990s many people, including Laxmi and her family, were forced to flee from her home country of Bhutan to Nepal. While those times were tough, her six months in New Jersey were even more difficult. She was living in a foreign country while mourning the loss of her husband who had unexpectedly passed away before she left Nepal.

When asked why she likes living in the U.S. now, her statement was short but heavy: "It saved my life and my children's coming here," Laxmi said. "We are safe now."

Although safety is irreplaceable, she does miss her family and the culture in Nepal. Her four children live in the U.S., but her parents and siblings are still back home. Next month Laxmi will return to Bhutan and Nepal for the first time since she left. Until then, she celebrates cultural festivities with her friends and family here in Nashville. Recently, she held a Nepali festival at her home, sharing her country's foods with loved ones. Laxmi also used the festival to engage her children in traditions from her father and grandfather — a reminder to remain connected to their roots.

Laxmi took a big step this year and earned her status as a U.S. citizen. She studied whenever she could, spending all of her free time with flashcards and study sheets.

"I even put the notes in my car to look at on the way to work," she said. "I needed to learn a lot, and I really wanted to pass — and I knew I could!"

Seven years since she first arrived in the U.S., Laxmi is missing home but finding a new community, looking forward to her travels and always thankful for her family's safety.

## CRITCHLOW RECEIVES FIRST OUT-OF-THE-BOX AWARD

*Glendale celebrated for National Blue Ribbon status*

On Wednesday, Oct. 12 at the Administrative and Supervisory Principal Meeting, Dr. Joseph presented the first Out-of-the-Box Award to Executive Lead Principal Dottie Critchlow. Dr. Joseph created this award to recognize individuals who represent what it means to be Out-of-the-Box, as explained in the book *Leadership and Self-Deception*. The award winners are those who enthusiastically focus on results, take responsibility, focus on solutions, take correction easily, are accountable, actively learn and teach, enthusiastically help others and inspire trust. Critchlow embodies all of those traits and was specifically recognized for her hands-on encouragement and support to all of her principals. Principals praised Critchlow for her constant presence in their schools and her ability to make them feel like her number one priority.

Glendale Elementary School was also recognized for earning National Blue Ribbon School status. Schools become a part of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Glendale Principal Jeanna Collins attributed the success to the high quality teaching taking place in Glendale classrooms every day.



Executive Lead Principal Dottie Critchlow accepts the first MNPS Out-of-the-Box Award.



Glendale Principal Jeanna Collins speaks about Glendale's recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School.

### BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

#### OCTOBER 11, 2016

- Bill Warren, Executive Lead Principal, was recognized for being named an American Graduate Champion by Nashville Public Television (NPT). American Graduate Champions are community leaders who are helping reduce the number of high school students who dropout.
- Students from the McGavock High School Dance Team performed.
- The Board reviewed and adopted a resolution condemning violence and hate speech against Muslims

and Muslim students. The resolution, among many things, ensures the creation of safe spaces for students to address issues of discrimination.

- The Office of Priority Schools unveiled its new name: L5 Innovation Schools. L5 refers to the goal of having a "Level 5" leader in each school. The L5 Innovation Staff shared its plan to support the district's 11 Priority schools in accelerating student learning and building positive school environments for students and staff.
- Dr. Joseph presented an update to his 100-day plan. (See details on page 2.)



## CALENDAR

### OCTOBER 10–27

Teacher Voice Sessions  
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Locations vary. See complete schedule at [mnps.org](http://mnps.org).

### OCTOBER 18

Bass Learning Center College & Career Fair  
9 a.m.–1 p.m.

5200 Delaware Ave, Nashville, TN 37209

### OCTOBER 22

Barber ShopTalk  
10–11 a.m.

Urban Class Barber Shop  
1801 Jefferson St., Suite 209  
Nashville, TN 37208

A continuation of the Mayor's community dialogue established through REAL Talk Nashville. Topic: "Education: Navigating School Politics and Strengthening Parent's Ability to Advocate for Their Students"

### OCTOBER 25

Board of Education Meeting  
5 p.m.

Central Office Board Room  
2601 Bransford Ave, Nashville, TN 37204

### OCTOBER 27

My Future. My Way. Career Exploration Fair (for freshman students)

8 a.m.–2 p.m.

Music City Center  
201 5th Ave. S, Nashville, TN 37203



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To submit to Forward Focus use this online form:  
<http://bit.ly/2acUpTv>

The deadline for submissions is the end of the business day on Tuesday. Submissions received by this deadline will be reviewed for the following week's edition.

### QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Email [communications@mnps.org](mailto:communications@mnps.org).



## NEWS BRIEFS

### Submit a Proposal to the Partners in Education Conference

The 2017 Partners in Education (PIE) Conference will be held Jan. 31–Feb. 2 at the Music City Center. The PIE Conference will focus on RTI2, behavior, early childhood education, special education, consolidated planning and monitoring, increasing access to core instruction, English learner instruction and intervention and early literacy. Proposals should be focused on school or district best practices in one of the areas listed above. Please submit your proposal no later than Friday, Oct. 21, at 5 p.m. <http://bit.ly/2dNPwBu>

### MNPS Annual Enrollment Starts Nov. 1

Annual enrollment for certificated employees is Nov. 1–30. This is your once-a-year chance to make benefit changes for 2017. Enrollment kits will be mailed out later this month. Email Lori Inman ([lori@highfidelityonline.com](mailto:lori@highfidelityonline.com)) with questions.

### Teacher Voice Sessions

We are a week into the MNPS Teacher Voice Sessions with plenty more sessions still to come. These meetings give staff the opportunity to participate in an open discussion about student achievement in a specific area of focus. The topics this week are priority schools, elementary schools, special education, literacy and visual and performing arts. All sessions begin at 4:30 p.m. Locations vary. Complete details are at [mnps.org](http://mnps.org).

### You Can Still Join the Employee Giving Campaign

To contribute to the annual MNPS Employee Giving Campaign, please visit your pledge site, or email our United Way representatives Sara Carter ([Sara.carter@uwmn.org](mailto:Sara.carter@uwmn.org)) and Alex Brodeur ([alex.brodeur@uwmn.org](mailto:alex.brodeur@uwmn.org)).

### New Location for Athletic News and Updates

The Department of Athletics is now sharing sports highlights of the fall sports season at this website: <http://bit.ly/2d7Oa6j>. Learn about district-wide sports updates in one place.

### Register for the MNPS Family Engagement Summit Starting Oct. 17

This year's Family Engagement Summit will be held on Jan. 4, from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. at Lipscomb University during a professional learning day so that teachers and school staff can engage. Participants will be invited to create New Year's Resolutions for family engagement practices aimed at impacting school culture and increasing student literacy. Through workshop sessions, a luncheon keynote address, and group planning time, participants will leave with increased capacity to engage families effectively. Space is limited. Register Here: <http://bit.ly/2dPgnhq> or email [Marianne.Beebe@mnps.org](mailto:Marianne.Beebe@mnps.org).

### Walk to School Day is Oct. 19

Each year, Walk Bike Nashville hosts Nashville's Walk to School Day, the biggest Walk Nashville Month event. In 2014, 60 schools signed up and more than 15,000 students, parents, teachers and community partners participated in Walk to School Day. Join this year to improve our children's physical activity and encourage safe, walkable neighborhoods. Register your school at [walkbikenashville.org](http://walkbikenashville.org).

### Teachers Can Get a Jump Start on National Board Candidacy

With the National Board Jump Start program teachers can get an early start to National Board Certification. The two-day training will cover foundations (standards and processes), differentiation in instruction and teaching practice and learning environment. All MNPS teachers are eligible but seating is limited to the first 50 registrants. Submit applications before Oct. 27. Register online at [teateachers.org](http://teateachers.org).

**WHEN:** Friday, Nov. 4, 6–9 p.m.  
Saturday, Nov. 5,  
8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Metropolitan Nashville Education Association  
531 Fairground Court  
Nashville, TN 37211

**REGISTRATION:** [mnea.com](http://mnea.com)