

Forward **FOCUS**

A News Bulletin For Employees Of Metro Nashville Public Schools

IN THIS ISSUE: TEACHER ENCOURAGES GOALS • EMPLOYEE GIVING CAMPAIGN • GRADEBOOK TIPS



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Shawn Joseph

I am constantly reminded of the fact that we are on a short journey in this time that we spend together called life. No one has ever lived a perfect life, and we all have things about ourselves that we need to improve. The question becomes are we committed to earnestly working on ourselves and are we earnestly striving to control the impulse to blame others for our misfortunes.

Last week, I was reminded of the need to continue to be kind, even when others' actions triggered emotions within me. Kindness is not a soft, weak personal characteristic. Demonstrating kindness in the midst of being treated unfairly or harshly takes a lot of strength. The magic of kindness lie in how it can affect the receiver and onlookers when it is authentically and genuinely shown. Classic American author Mark Twain once said, "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."

This week, let's work to fight a little less. As you experience tensions, be thoughtful about what a kind response would look like in that moment. Next week, I'll spend a little more time talking about kindness, but I can tell you that your willingness and ability to consider someone else's point of view or to be kind in a moment where you usually would react negatively will make our organization much better! Our children need champions like you fighting for them. Please take a moment to look at this video and be inspired by the work you and your colleagues are doing to change children's lives.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw

FEATURE STORY



ASSESSING GROWTH & CUSTOMIZING INSTRUCTION

Metro Schools is taking steps to introduce a new assessment that measures student growth and identifies learning needs

Pending MNPS Board of Education approval, this school year teachers and students will be introduced to a new kind of assessment— the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, an assessment from The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). The MAP assessment is unique in that it accurately measures student growth and individual learning needs by reacting and adjusting questions as the student progresses through the assessment. Because of this individualization, assessment results are much more

reliable and provide student-specific information so that teachers can tailor each student's instruction.

The NWEA is a non-profit educational services organization known for assessments that lead to student development through a more personalized learning experience. Through research, NWEA has compiled an item bank of assessment questions based on state standards that builds a custom test for each student who takes the assessment.

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The MAP test is designed to accurately measure a child's academic level. As students complete the assessment they will see questions that challenge them at their own unique level. If a student answers a question correctly, the test follows up with a more challenging question. In turn, if they answer incorrectly, the test follows up with a less challenging question. This pattern continues as the assessment adapts to determine the student's true learning abilities.

After completing the first assessment, the plan is for students to fall into certain categories based on their Ready for Instruction Today (RIT) score. This score helps teachers plan for each student's individualized instructional needs. From this personalized score, teachers can understand what skills and concepts students still need to master and most importantly, teachers will understand what they need to teach next.

Once teachers are empowered with each student's unique scores, they can use this information to develop strong

NWEA ASSESSMENTS ARE USED WITH NEARLY 10 MILLION STUDENTS.

planning processes and inform and differentiated instruction. This assessment will not directly contribute positively or negatively to a student's grade in class—it will help students learn and prepare him/her for the assessments that will count. Teachers can develop strategies that lead to more efficient time management and student supports to address individual weaknesses and strengths.

Additionally, teachers will be able to share individual student score results with students and parents and can partner with them to develop intentions, expectations and goals. During these sessions, students can be given goals or they can set their own goals to work toward for the next test, such as a higher individual score.

Some MNPS schools have already implemented the MAP assessment and our intention is to implement the Reading MAP assessment next semester. Check out this week's Employee Spotlight to understand how teachers and administrators at Smith Springs Elementary School are using the data from their student's MAP assessments to create plans and inform instruction.

2016-17 READING ONLY

(NWEA MAP-R) Grades 2-8

Pending Board Approval

JANUARY 9TH - 13TH
Administration Training

JANUARY 23RD - FEBRUARY 17TH
Administration I

MAY 1ST - MAY 25TH
Administration II

QUICK FACTS

1. The assessment is administered online.
2. The assessment is untimed, but takes on-average 45 minutes for students to complete.
3. This school year, MNPS will administer the Reading MAP assessment twice.

INFINITE CAMPUS: USING THE GRADEBOOK

As you already know, Family Portal, the parent-facing piece of Infinite Campus, becomes live for all Metro families in January 2017. Over the next few months, we will share different ways for teachers and staff to capitalize on and expand on their current Infinite Campus and Family Portal knowledge.

Starting in January, the frequency of family conversations focused on school work, attendance, and classroom events will increase simply because of the visibility families will have into their child's education. This dialogue is an important step forward in school-level family engagement at the school level. Teachers and staff can best facilitate these conversations with a little bit of preparation now to lend to a smooth transition in January.

You're probably already using Gradebook, but this week we're sharing some – some of which you may know and others you many not – for getting the most out of the Gradebook function in Infinite Campus.

- In January, families will be able to see if an assignment was turned in late. If you collect an assignment but do not grade it by the due date you've assigned in Campus Gradebook, it will be considered 'late' and families will be notified as such. To avoid any confusion, you can collect all assignments and mark them as 'turned in' in Gradebook. A 'turned in' status on any assignment will not reflect negatively in Family Portal.
- You can proactively upload all assignments into Campus Gradebook. Although you must assign a due date, you can 'hide' any future assignments until the date approaches.

Family Portal will give families unprecedented access to information like assignments, grades and test scores. This access will undoubtedly lead to more family conversations around school, which is a great step forward for our families! Teachers can contribute to this conversation by ensuring Infinite Campus is updated frequently with accurate and reliable information.

TERMS TO KNOW

ASSIGNMENT

An assignment is uploaded into Gradebook and is assigned a grade and a due date.

DUE DATE

The date an assignment is due. This date is selected when an assignment is created but it can be changed.

LATE ASSIGNMENT

An assignment is considered late if the grade is not inputted into Gradebook by the due date.

TURNED IN

Teachers can mark an assignment as Turned In if the due date has passed but the assignment has not been graded to ensure items aren't inaccurately labeled as late assignments.



HILL ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO SET THEIR OWN GOALS

Teacher uses MAPs to empower students and improve scores

Michelle Hill is in her sixth year of teaching and her second year at Smith Springs Elementary, one of the Metro Schools that has implemented the MAP assessment with its own funds. She is a fourth grade literacy and writing teacher, a position she loves because it allows her to do focused and fun activities with her students like writing workshops. Hill says the MAP allows her to tailor lessons to a student's level and create subgroups for her activities.

Hill is not the only teacher who is using results from the MAP assessment to guide instruction. Her teaching team meets every week to differentiate instruction, identify class resources and collaborate with each students' learning team to monitor growth. The MAP assessment has helped the team focus lesson planning and support their shared direction with current data. The testing vendor, NWEA, provides subject area scores and norms, visual charts and growth summaries that are easy to understand for both the teacher and student. With those statistics, teachers meet with students to set collaborative goals.

"My students respond well to the goals; they feel good when they work towards something," said Hill. "It helps them to connect what we are doing in class to this test and take ownership of their scores."

Hill noted that the connection has been an important aspect of the test's success—her advice to teachers when they start to use this assessment is to make sure their students understand the purpose and associate the test to their classroom lessons.

"I want them to know that MAP is helping me to help them," said Hill, "and that it doesn't affect their grade but it's still important."

MAP is given online four times a year with administration time averaging 45 minutes per student (officially un-timed). The test plans to be shared (pending Board approval) for district-wide use this school year.

EMPLOYEE GIVING WRAP UP

Final numbers for Employee Giving Campaign show a big jump from last year

The numbers have been finalized from the 2016 Employee Giving Campaign and we have more than doubled our participation numbers from last year. Your donations are investing in the community through Metro Schools' partners: the Metropolitan Nashville Education Foundation, Nashville Public Education Foundation, Community Health Charities, Community Shares and the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville.

The organizations we support through this campaign help our neighbors and families in times of crisis, assist our students with scholarships, support medical research and fund many not-for-profits working in a variety of causes. Although we did not achieve our goal of 50 percent participation overall this year, we did greatly improve our numbers from last year's campaign.

Thank you to everyone who donated! Many departments and schools reached 50 percent participation and received a free breakfast from Panera last week.

Payment sources will be charged, and beginning in January 2017 continued campaign support via payroll deductions will begin. Campaign managers will pay the designations to organizations monthly as the deductions are made from paychecks. Any one-time payments from employees will apply directly to this year.

2016 vs. 2015 DONATION RESULTS

TOTAL DOLLARS RAISED:

\$130,985	\$76,127
2016	2015

TOTAL DONORS:

\$1,712	\$581
2016	2015

TOTAL RESPONDENTS:

\$2,733	\$808
2016	2015

PARTICIPATION:

22%	6%
2016	2015

[If you would still like to donate, email our United Way representatives Sara Carter (Sara.carter@uwmn.org) and Alex Brodeur (alex.brodeur@uwmn.org) with this information in the body of the email: "I would like to confirm my 2016 annual gift of \$---- and I would like that to be processed via payroll deduction to X organization."]

POLICY REVIEW

The Examinations and Exemptions from Semester Exams (Policy IM 4.117) was recently revised.

The policy, which defines exemption criteria for high school exams, has been updated with these changes:

1. For senior exam exemption, the minimum average of a 90 in the course can now include extra points awarded from honors and advanced courses.
2. Any student in grades 9-12 enrolled in Advanced Academic Courses may take the associated AP/IB/AICE exam as an

alternate to the teacher's second semester exam.

The full policy can be reviewed in its entirety on MNPS.org.

Additionally, If you want to learn more about any policy or procedure within Metro Schools, visit MNPS.org/policies-and-procedures. From there, you can filter policies by category or by tags and you can also quickly search the policy library using keywords. For each policy, you can review a quick summary or download the entire policy file.



CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 11

Deadline to apply for Classroom Mini-Grants
<http://thetsin.org/>

NOVEMBER 11

Veterans Day

NOVEMBER 16

Progress Reports Issued

NOVEMBER 17

PENCIL Foundation's Principal for a Day
Start of school - 11 a.m.
All Metro Schools

NOVEMBER 19

John Lewis Public Lecture
for Nashville Reads
10 a.m.
*Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet School
613 17th Ave. N, Nashville, TN 37203*

NOVEMBER 22

Board of Education Meeting
Dr. Joseph's 100 Day Overview
5 p.m.
*Central Office Board Room
2601 Bransford Ave, Nashville, TN 37203*

NOVEMBER 23-25

Thanksgiving Holiday
(Nov. 24-25 for 12-month employees)

NOVEMBER 30

Close of certificated staff annual enrollment



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PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
Exceeding Great Expectations

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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.



NEWS BRIEFS

TN Arts Academy

Applications are open for the 2017 TN Arts Academy. The Academy sessions are held on the campus of Belmont University in Nashville. The Academy consists of two tracks, one geared to elementary/lower middle school teachers and the other designed for upper middle/high school teachers. Participants are grouped according to their specific teaching assignment, in the fields of music, theatre or visual art. If you would like to be considered for a partial scholarship from MNPS/ Visual and Performing Arts Department, please plan to apply to the Academy by Dec. 1. Look for more information coming soon about scholarships.
www.tennesseeartsacademy.org

Register ASAP for Family Engagement Summit

MNPS staff is invited to the 5th Annual MNPS Family Engagement Summit. This year's summit is Jan. 4, 2017 from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Lipscomb University. The summit is during our MNPS Professional Learning day so more teachers and school staff can engage. Through differentiated workshop sessions, a luncheon keynote address, and group planning time, participants will leave with increased capacity to engage families effectively. Space is limited so encourage registration ASAP. Sign up here: <http://bit.ly/2dPgnhq>.

MLK Magnet High School Student Wins

NPL Geofilter Contest

Congratulations to Bob Qian, a student from MLK Magnet High School, whose artwork was selected to be the Geofilter for the downtown branch of the Nashville Public Library. Stop by Snapchat and use his creative design!

Reminder: Walk-Through Tuesdays

Walk-Through Tuesdays are a great way for your school to engage with families and show them why your school could be the best fit for their child. We've shared all dates and times (10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) with the community to encourage them to check out Metro Schools.

Every Tuesday in November is a designated Walk-Through Tuesday. Is your school ready for students to tour?

Remaining Walk-Through Tuesdays:

- Nov. 15
- Nov. 22
- Nov. 29
- Jan. 24
- Jan. 31

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY FOR BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS

Six Metro Schools teachers were recognized for their hard work and achievement in attaining National Board Certification last year. November will be their one year anniversary of becoming Nationally Board Certified. See the list of recipients here:
<http://bit.ly/2ezWyID>
Their areas of certification range from Early Literacy to Middle Childhood Generalist.

NEW HIRE

Financial Operations has hired Tameka Brown as the new Accounts Payable Supervisor. Brown comes to Metro Schools from Community Health Systems and is a graduate of Tennessee State University. Tameka joined Financial Operations on Monday, Nov. 7.

Have a staff recognition or In Memoriam to share with others in the district? Please submit to <http://bit.ly/2acUpTv>.