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# CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## Synopsis

In 2010, Mayor Karl Dean created a Task Force charged with developing a Child and Youth Master Plan (CYMP) for Davidson County. The Task Force developed a list of fourteen goal outcomes for child and youth well-being, along with a series of strategic objectives and strategies to guide progress toward each goal outcome. The outcomes and strategies outlined in the CYMP form the basis for the Children and Youth dimension of the Nashville 2040 General Plan.

Prepared by

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### Role and purpose of background papers



This background paper was developed to provide input to the NashvilleNext planning process. It was researched and authored by community members interested, involved, and knowledgeable on the topic. The authors present best practices, an evaluation of the state of the topic in the Nashville community today, and recommendations for consideration during the planning process.

This paper provides a starting point for broader community discussion and reflection based on the research and recommendations of the authors. Throughout the planning process, NashvilleNext will use this and other background papers, ongoing research, departmental involvement, community input and engagement to discuss, refine and formulate the policies and recommendations for the general plan.

The information and recommendations provided in this background paper are solely those of the authors and contributors and are being provided at the beginning of the NashvilleNext process to start community discussion.

The NashvilleNext Steering Committee thanks and extends its sincere appreciation to the authors of and contributors to this background paper for the time and effort to provide this report for community consideration and discussion. The Steering Committee looks forward to the ongoing dialogue on the issues and recommendations that the authors provide.

Any final policies and recommendations endorsed by the NashvilleNext Steering Committee for the consideration of the Metropolitan Planning Commission will be the result of the entire planning process and upcoming community engagement and discussion.

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In 2010, Mayor Karl Dean created a Task Force charged with developing a Child and Youth Master Plan (CYMP) for Davidson County. The Task Force developed a list of 14 goal outcomes for child and youth well-being, along with a series of strategic objectives and strategies to guide progress toward each goal outcome. This background report is a summation of the work of the CYMP. For more information go to <http://www.nashville.gov/Mayors-Office/Priorities/Education/Reports-and-Committees/Child-and-Youth-Master-Plan.aspx>

### GOAL OUTCOME ONE

**All children and youth will be provided a safe and stable home and a supportive, engaged family.**

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children and youth who experience active consistent parenting, positive communication, and emotional support from their families;
- Reduce the number of children and youth exposed to family violence; and
- Decrease the number of homeless children and youth.



*Photos courtesy of Nashville Civic Design Center*

### Best Practices

There are a number of well-supported programs nationwide for the prevention of child abuse and the promotion of strong, supportive families. Examples include Early Head Start, Families and Schools Together (FAST), The Incredible Years Training Series, the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) and the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P). These programs focus on issues such as parenting skills, parent-child communication, stress reduction, children's emotional development, and effective discipline and behavior management. Delivery methods for services vary widely. Some programs are center-based, some are school-based, and some provide home visits. Some work with families one-on-one, while others provide group sessions. (Source: FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention)

The American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law has studied promising approaches for helping children exposed to domestic violence. One very promising practice is using law enforcement officers to disseminate information about services that are available to children exposed to violence. Since law enforcement officers are typically first on the scene at domestic violence incidents, they are in a good position to inform parents about services that are available. Since the parents are likely to be in a





state of crisis at the time of the officer's arrival, it is recommended that officers leave written materials for parents to consult later in addition to talking with the parents about services.

According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, best practices for reducing child and family homelessness include increasing the number of housing vouchers available, increasing access to services and supports provided by mainstream and targeted programs, developing individual support plans for each homeless family, and providing trauma-informed family support services.

### State of Affairs

Exposure to violence, whether it is perpetrated against a child or someone else in the home, drastically increases the likelihood of criminal behavior in the young person exposed. Unfortunately, the incidence of child abuse in Davidson County is 2.5 times

the national average, and child sexual abuse is almost four times the national average (Kids Count Data Center, 2007). Strong parent involvement is proven to help protect teens from violent behavior even if they witness violence.

Consistent and stable housing during childhood is critical for positive social, behavioral, educational, and mental health outcomes. According to a 2009 survey by the Davidson County Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition, 20.5% of MNPS high school students have experienced an episode of homelessness in their lifetime. Davidson County also has the highest rate of youth committed to state custody in Tennessee, and studies show that one out of five teens who age out of foster care will become homeless.

### Recommendations

To promote consistent and supportive parenting, we recommend the implementation of Promise Neigh-

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borhoods, which will provide counseling for new parents, high quality child care and early childhood education, safe and educational after school programs, crime prevention support systems, community health facilities, and other resources that strengthen families. We also recommend providing “passports” to connect low-income children and their families to cultural venues to spark imaginations and learning through exposure to the performing arts, museums, history and nature.

To reduce the incidence of family violence, we recommend the creation of a Nashville Family Connections Center (NFCC) modeled after the Family Justice Center approach. A Family Justice Center is the co-location of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals who work together to provide coordinated services to victims of family violence. A Nashville Family Connections Center would focus on family violence as a whole including domestic violence, child abuse, delinquency prevention, intervention and family support services. The NFCC would include at minimum: MNPD, DA, DCS, Juvenile Court, Health Department, and Metro Social Services as well as other interested government and non-profit youth/family agencies. Satellite centers would provide an assortment of services that are needed in that particular part of the Nashville community. The effectiveness of the NFCC would be further enhanced through shared data management among all agencies providing services.

To decrease homelessness among Nashville children and youth, we recommend creating short- and long-term transitional shelters for youth. Vacant or unused facilities (hotel rooms, hospital rooms, etc.) could be converted to transitional housing. This program would build upon models developed in other cities and bring to scale some of the efforts undertaken by Oasis Center.



### Action Taken

- The Martha O’Bryan Center has begun implementation of a “Promise Neighborhood” as described above. The neighborhood that is currently the focus of this initiative is the Stratford High School Cluster in East Nashville. The Nashville Promise Neighborhood is a collaborative network of services and supports to achieve the following:
  - Successful students
  - Healthy families
  - Vibrant neighborhoods
  - Graduates moving on to college and career

Please refer to the Martha O’Bryan Center website at <http://www.marthaobryan.org/community/promise> for more information on Nashville’s first Promise Neighborhood.

### GOAL OUTCOME TWO

**All children and youth will be provided safe places in the community, where they are welcomed and supported by positive adult relationships.**

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children and youth who have a positive caring adult in their life;
- Decrease the number of youth who are influenced by gang culture;
- Increase the number of children and youth who have access to safe and welcoming community spaces.

### Best Practices

In 2010, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice published a bulletin on evidence-based gang prevention programs. An important first step is to conduct a community gang assessment to determine types and levels of gang activity and to identify gaps in community gang prevention services. The OJJDP has published *A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem* (available online at [www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Assessment-Guide/Assessment-Guide.pdf](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Assessment-Guide/Assessment-Guide.pdf)) as a resource to help communities conduct a thorough gang assessment. Once the gang assessment is complete, two types of prevention should be employed: primary prevention, which reaches the entire youth population, and secondary prevention, which is targeted at youth who are at high risk of gang involvement. A school-based primary prevention program that shows evidence of effectiveness is the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program (G.R.E.A.T.), in which law enforcement officers offer middle-school students a 13-week curriculum on the dangers of gang involvement ([www.great-online.org](http://www.great-online.org)). A highly successful secondary prevention program is the Preventive Treatment Program in Montreal. This program targets low-SES boys aged 7 to 9

who have previously displayed disruptive behavior in school. The program combines parent training and childhood skill development to prevent later gang involvement among these high-risk boys.

### State of Affairs

Caring adults are the cornerstone of child and youth development. Unfortunately, according to a 2007 survey, one in three MNPS students feel they do not have an adult in their life who they could talk to about their problems.

Most participants in the 2010 CYMP Community Survey felt that there are not many places in the Nashville community where youth are welcomed and respected. Between 15 and 19 percent of Nashville youth reported feeling unsafe in a public location (neighborhood, community center, park, or other public place). The most common reasons for feeling unsafe were violence and gang activity (CYMP Youth Survey 2010).

There is a public sentiment that youth are part of the community's problems, and many people are actually afraid of youth (CYMP Community Survey 2010). Where youth experience poverty, low neighborhood attachment, community disorganization, and the high availability of drugs and firearms, there is an increased likelihood that youth will commit violence. In a study by the Metro Public Health Department, 18 percent of students reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife, or club) in the past 30 days.

### Recommendations

To decrease the number of youth who are influenced by gang activity, we recommend developing an inter-agency, community task force focused specifically on addressing Nashville's growing gang problem. While Nashville has a number of gang prevention, intervention and suppression programs in place, none have conducted a comprehensive gang assessment. There is currently no plan in place to bring these various groups together to work on this issue. We suggest

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appointing a task force of local experts working on the “front lines” to lead a comprehensive school and community gang assessment.

We also recommend creating a centralized community-based “gang awareness center” to coordinate and provide certified, ongoing training and community education services to parents, youth and school staff. All school staff must have at least basic knowledge of gangs and gang culture both locally and nationally so that they are able to identify gangs and understand the threat they pose. Presentations to youth on the negative impacts of gangs on one’s life, family and friends will eliminate some of the glamour and excitement surrounding gang membership.

Finally, we propose creating a 1-800 Gang Hotline, an anonymous phone line that will give students a safe way to provide authorities with information on gang activities and threats.

### Action Taken

- The Metro Police Department’s GREAT (Gang Resistance Education And Training) program is among those of police departments in 47 other states who provide the GREAT program to students in schools ranging from the 4th through the 8th grade. GREAT is a school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curriculum. With prevention as its primary objective, the program is intended as an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership. Please see the Police Department’s website link below for more information on GREAT.
  - <http://www.nashville.gov/Police-Department/Community-Programs/Youth-Programs/GREAT.aspx>

### GOAL OUTCOME THREE

**All children and youth will develop valuable life skills, social competencies and positive values and become law abiding, productive citizens.**

### Key Objectives

- Increase number of children and youth who grow up exposed to positive values;
- Increase the number of children and youth who are exposed to learning opportunities that will provide them with the life/soft skills needed to succeed;



*Photo courtesy of Nashville Civic Design Center*



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- Decrease the number of children and youth who are victims of delinquent acts;
- Decrease the number of youth committing delinquent acts;
- Increase the number of children and youth who contribute to their community in meaningful ways; and
- Increase the number of children and youth who are able to maintain balance in their lives with regard to work, home, school and social life.

### Best Practices

After discovering that so-called “soft” skills such as communication, work ethic, problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork are more important to employers than academic qualifications, the U.S. Department of Labor created a curriculum for teaching youth these critical skills. The curriculum (available at <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>) consists of thirty lessons divided into six units and is designed for students of all learning styles and ability levels, including students with disabilities. Each lesson includes an active element (such as role-play or a game), a discussion, a journaling activity, and an extension activity. The curriculum was implemented as a pilot program at seven different sites across the country, and feedback from facilitators and youth participants was overwhelmingly positive.



The Violence Prevention Program Assessment Tool developed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction helps schools to identify gaps and strengths in their violence prevention programs. The components included in the assessment tool are recognized as best practices in violence prevention. They include school environment, curriculum and instruction, student programs, pupil services, adult programs, and family and community. The tool can help school districts set priorities for violence prevention programs.

### State of Affairs

In 2009 almost 12,000 citation and arrest charges were made against youth in Nashville (MNPD). Of the respondents to the 2010 CYMP Community Survey, 56 percent believe that Nashville is not doing a good job supporting the positive development of its children (ages 0-10), and over 80 percent believe Nashville is not doing a good job supporting the positive development of its youth (ages 11-21). More than a third of respondents ranked “ensuring young people develop social competencies, life skills, and positive values” as one of the three most pressing issues for the community to address.

### Recommendations

To increase the number of children and youth who grow up exposed to positive values, we suggest identifying a short list of positive values to be displayed across the community and then creating a framework for sharing these values in sequenced and age-appropriate ways both through school curriculum and through out-of-school activities.

To ensure that Nashville children and youth develop the life skills needed to succeed, we recommend developing a teen apprenticeship and internship program which would allow middle and high school students to explore pathways to careers through training and internships (either for pay or school credit). We also suggest developing a city-wide Summer Youth

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Employment Program to connect youth (especially low-income youth) with meaningful work assignments from community employers such as municipal offices, non-profit organizations, hospitals and educational institutions. This program would provide youth with the chance to learn job skills and workplace norms, develop a work history and connect with adults who can provide advice and references.

To decrease the number of children and youth who commit or are victims of delinquent acts, we recommend creating youth “Power Hours”, a messaging campaign that highlights in a positive way the hour or two after youth are released from school and are most prominent in the community. This messaging campaign should be designed to change the community’s perception of youth activity during out-of-school time and create a more safe and welcoming environment. The program would include opportunities within the community to welcome youth after school hours and engage them in positive activities. To directly address youth violence and bullying, we suggest enhancing elementary-school-based bullying prevention programs and utilizing the Youth Violence Prevention tool developed in Milwaukee (see <http://dpi.state.wi.us/sspw/yvp.html>).

To increase the number of children and youth who are able to maintain balance in their lives with regard to work, home, school and social life, we recommend integrating and maintaining a “life coach” resource person in each school building’s resource center to coach students on soft skills. This position could be filled by volunteers from area colleges and universities.

### Action Taken

- Nashville Career Advancement Center Summer Youth Internship Program:
  - This program provides a short-term learning and employment opportunity for Nashville Davidson County youth. Participants will be assigned to work at a Metro Depart-

ment for twenty hours per week for four weeks. In addition, both before and throughout the program, all participants will receive opportunities for skill building and training.

Please refer to the website at <http://www.nashville.gov/Nashville-Career-Advancement-Center/Youth/Metro-Summer-Youth-Internship-Program.aspx> for more information on the internship program.

- Mayor’s Youth Council:
  - The Mayor’s Youth Council (MYC) is a group of student leaders comprised of high school juniors and seniors from public and private schools all over Nashville. MYC members are representatives of the geographical, ra-





cial, and ethnic diversity of Metro Nashville and Davidson County. The Council provides feedback to members of the Metropolitan Government on issues related to youth, solicits youth participation in citywide initiatives, and works with city leaders to help Nashville be a better city for all young people to live.

Please refer to the website at <http://www.nashville.gov/Mayors-Office/Priorities/Education/Programs-and-Initiatives/Mayors-Youth-Council.aspx> for more information.

- Community Enhancement Fund (grants from Metro), some of which are spent on after school funding.
  - <http://www.mnps.org/Page56837.aspx>

#### GOAL OUTCOME FOUR

**All children and youth will have a positive sense of self and confidence in their future.**

#### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children and youth who obtain a high school diploma, GED or vocational certification;
- Increase the number of children and youth who are informed about and successful during the transition points in education;
- Increase the number of children and youth who have opportunities to explore academic and career options; and
- Decrease the number of idle youth (not enrolled in school and not in the labor force).

#### Best Practices

The University of Wisconsin has assembled a list of scientifically supported programs for increasing

high school graduation rates. Dropout prevention programs for teenage mothers that offer multiple services, such as remedial education, vocational training, case management, health care, transportation assistance and child care, increase graduation rates of teenage mothers by an average of 13 percent. Career academies (small learning communities within high schools that focus on specific vocational fields) have been proven to increase high school graduation rates, especially among students at high risk of dropping out. There is also evidence that attending a career academy increases earnings in early adulthood. Mentoring programs that pair high-dropout-risk students with trained adult mentors are also highly effective at increasing graduation rates. Mentors should meet with students at least once a week to establish a personal relationship, help students overcome obstacles, and model positive behavior and decision-making.

### State of Affairs

In 2008, 72.6% of Nashville's public high school students graduated on time (TN Department of Ed). Six percent of Nashville youth ages 16-19 do not attend high school and do not work. Lack of a high school diploma, GED or skills training results in a negative view of one's personal future. Almost 35 percent of CYMP Community Survey respondents ranked "ensuring youth are emotionally well, have confidence and a positive sense of self" as one of the three most important issues for the community to address.

### Recommendations

To increase the number of children and youth who are informed about and successful during the transition points in education, we recommend integrating and maintaining a "transition coach" resource person in each school building's resource center. After defining the various educational transitions that students experience, transition coaches would be trained to identify barriers to success at these transition points and to help students overcome them. To further facilitate successful transitions, we advise coordinating

the efforts of all school-based coaches, including guidance counselors, life coaches, literacy coaches, and instructional coaches.

### Action Taken

- The Mayor's Scholars Academy is a free, four-week intensive academic summer program to help rising 9th and 10th grade students prepare for success in high school and college. Scholars Academy couples intensive learning with fun, engaging activities, and weekly field trips, all at no cost to the students. Scholars Academy serves up to 360 students, and is sited at Cane Ridge, Glenclyff, Maplewood, and Pearl Cohn High Schools. The Mayor's Scholars Academy began as a pilot program in the summer of 2012 for rising ninth graders, and is part of Mayor Dean's efforts to boost the number of students who attend and graduate from college.
  - [Scholarsacademy.Nashville.gov](http://Scholarsacademy.Nashville.gov)

#### GOAL OUTCOME FIVE

**All children and youth will have opportunities to have their voice heard and positively impact their community.**

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number and diversity of youth engaged in leadership and/or volunteer opportunities outside of school;
- Increase the number of children and youth who hold leadership positions or have roles in the city; and
- Increase the number of children and youth who are civically aware.

### Best Practices

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) has assembled a set of research-informed, results-based policy strategies for promoting youth civic engagement. One strategy is promoting youth voter registration by providing youth with ongoing training in

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civic participation, requiring county election officials to provide voter registration and education drives at high schools and colleges, and organizing candidate forums for youth. A second strategy is establishing opportunities for authentic youth voice in government by creating and supporting state and local youth advisory councils, involving youth in community mapping and planning efforts, and establishing youth-run grant programs to support youth-driven projects. CSSP's third recommended strategy is promoting diverse forms of youth service by funding school service-learning programs, organizing a state or local community service campaign to connect students to volunteer opportunities, and holding a youth summit to involve youth in upcoming policy decisions.

### State of Affairs

Leadership opportunities contribute to developing self-confidence and positive life skills. Unfortunately, youth leadership opportunities are limited in supply and extremely competitive. There are also very few opportunities in Nashville for youth to have a voice in city-wide policy and decision making.

In the 2010 CYMP Community Survey, 94 percent of respondents felt that youth have unique and important insight to offer that must be included in community decision making, and 91 percent believe that youth must have leadership roles if we are going to solve our community's critical problems. However, only 20 percent of respondents think that the Nashville community does a good job of engaging children and youth in service to the community.

### Recommendations

To increase the number of children and youth who hold leadership positions and/or have roles in the city, we first recommend adopting a Nashville Youth Bill of Rights as a way to express and formally recognize youth needs to Metro government and adult community members. This Bill of Rights should be developed in partnership with the Mayor's Youth



Council and with guidance from representatives of community-based service providers and Metro agencies. Issues to address in the Youth Bill of Rights might include, for example, health, safety, education and/or environment.

We further recommend providing more opportunities for youth to engage with Metro Council members so that youth can have their perspectives taken into account in the city policy and decision making process. Possibilities include inviting the Mayor's Youth Council and other Nashville youth to attend an annual Council meeting focused on youth issues; inviting all Council members to attend an annual Youth Summit; and encouraging Council members to recruit youth representatives from their districts to serve as formal Youth Advisors.

### Action Taken

- Mayor's Youth Council
  - As described earlier in this report, the Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) involves of student leaders who are juniors and seniors in public and private high schools all over Nashville. Please refer to the website at <http://www.nashville.gov/Mayors-Office/Priorities/Education/Programs-and-Initiatives/Mayors-Youth-Council.aspx> for more information.

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### GOAL OUTCOME SIX

**All children and youth will experience social equity regarding access to opportunities, resources and information that are critical to their success in the 21st Century.**

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children, youth and families who are literate;
- Increase the number of youth who know how to find, use and understand information and resources regarding education and employment; and
- Increase the number of children, youth and parents who have daily access to low- or no-cost high-speed internet.

### Best Practices

In 2008, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education published a guide to effective classroom and intervention practices for improving adolescent literacy. Three of their recommended practices are supported by especially strong scientific evidence. The first is providing explicit

vocabulary instruction. Students should be repeatedly exposed to new words in multiple contexts and should be given opportunities to use new vocabulary in discussion and writing. Students should also be taught strategies for independent vocabulary learning. A second strongly-supported practice is providing direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction. Finally, IES recommends making available intensive individualized interventions for struggling readers. Teachers should use screening assessments to identify students who are struggling with reading and then match them with a trained reading specialist for custom-tailored intervention.

### State of Affairs

One in every eight Davidson County residents is unable to read (Community Needs Assessment for Adult Literacy, 2010). Early listening, reading and speaking tools are not readily available to all children, especially children in low-income and/or limited-English-speaking families. The high schools with the highest number of economically disadvantaged and minority students also have the lowest average ACT scores in MNPS. In a 2007 school culture and climate survey, MNPS students reported dramatic disparities across public high schools in perceived school expect-



tations, preparation for the future, sense of voice in the school, and access to critical information. A large number of economically disadvantaged youth do not have ready access to computers and the internet which prevents them from accessing information, resources, and electronic tools that are critical for civic and educational engagement and preparation for college, work, and life.

### Recommendations

To combat illiteracy in the Nashville community, we recommend increasing time spent on literacy at all levels of schooling and improving middle and high school teacher training in literacy instruction. We suggest monthly reading assessments for all students to measure progress and identify students who need additional literacy support. Immediate expert intervention should be provided for students who are below grade level in reading or who are losing ground on monthly assessments. To address the specific needs of ELL students, we suggest building an optional incentive-enhanced summer institute for ELL students that focuses on both reading and speaking. We also recommend providing more year-round opportunities for all youth to be involved in literacy-focused programs.

### Action Taken

- My City Academy is an initiative of Mayor Karl Dean's New American Advisory Council. It is intended to build a network of concerned citizens, increase knowledge of how city government works among Nashville's immigrants and refugees and encourage engagement of all Nashvillians. My City Academy will host one session a month for six months beginning in March 2013. The academy will cover topics such as the history of Nashville and its government, the State Legislature, infrastructure, public safety, social services and child and youth issues.

For more information, please refer to <http://www.empowernashville.org/media/photos-events/>

- Limitless Libraries is a cooperative program of Nashville Public Library and Metro Nashville Public Schools with the goal of improving school libraries, fostering resource sharing between the two institutions, and improving student access to learning materials.
  - [http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/home/891928-312/expanding\\_nashvilles\\_limitless\\_libraries.html.csp](http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/slj/home/891928-312/expanding_nashvilles_limitless_libraries.html.csp) or <http://www.limitlesslibraries.org/>
- Nashville Reads works to bring the entire city together to read great literature, in an attempt to broaden the literary horizons of the city and open up a forum for discussion. Through Nashville Reads, the Nashville Public Library is partnering with members of the community to host book discussion groups around the city.
  - <http://nashvillepubliclibrary.org/nashvil-lereads/>
- The MNPS Office of English Learners works to ensure that Limited English Proficient students attain English proficiency in all areas of language, develop high levels of academic achievement, and meet the same academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet. By providing meaningful language learning in a student-centered, accepting environment, our Limited English Proficient students are empowered with the tools necessary to become a vital part of our culturally diverse community. To provide additional support to this important program, Mayor Dean's recent budget funded additional positions for it.
  - <http://www.mnps.org/Page57039.aspx>

### GOAL OUTCOME SEVEN

## All children and youth will experience a safe and caring school environment that supports social, emotional and academic development.

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of school staff, teachers and other adults who positively interact with students to support their social and emotional well-being;
- Increase the number of youth who have a sense of connectedness to school and feel that education will prepare them to be successful adults;
- Increase number of students who feel their school has a caring and supportive climate;
- Increase the number of students who have positive perceptions of campus safety and security; and
- Decrease the number of students who drop out of college due to financial hardship or challenging life circumstances.

### Best Practices

The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention recommends a comprehensive approach to school safety. Though providing access to school psychologists or counselors is important to addressing delinquent behavior by students, evidence suggests that counseling alone has little effect. The most successful school safety programs combine counseling with clear messages about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, consistent enforcement of rules, and instruction in critical thinking skills that enable youth to consider alternatives to delinquent behavior. School resource officers (law enforcement officers specially trained to deal with weapons and violent behavior in schools) and peer mediation programs, in which students are trained to help other students resolve conflicts, have also proven effective at preventing school violence.

### State of Affairs

CYMP Community Survey respondents ranked ensuring academic achievement and providing a safe and caring school environment as the two most pressing issues the Nashville community needs to work on. In surveys, community listening sessions, and youth focus groups, many youth reported experiences such as bullying that are not indicative of a caring school climate. Many also expressed that positive relationships with teachers, administrators and other school staff are important to their motivation and engagement in school. In the 2010 CYMP Youth Survey, 12 percent of student respondents indicated that they felt unsafe at school.

### Recommendations

The CYMP contains no recommendations for achieving Outcome 7.

### Action Taken

- MNPS has an Office of School Security and MNPD has been charged by Mayor Dean to work in partnership with this office. The Office of School Security is part of the Student Services Division of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.
  - <http://www.mnps.org/Page57094.aspx>



### GOAL OUTCOME EIGHT

## **All children and youth will achieve academically through high quality, engaging educational opportunities that address the strengths and needs of the individual.**

### **Key Objectives**

- Increase the number of children enrolled in high quality early childhood programs;
- Increase the number of students who remain at the same school for the entire academic year;
- Increase the number of youth and families who receive technical assistance regarding the mechanics of application for and funding of a post-secondary education; and
- Increase the number of low-income and first generation college students.

### **Best Practices**

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education Awarded Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants to the nine states that had created the best plans to increase access to high-quality early childhood education for low-income families. One of the winning states was North Carolina. The state's "NC Ready" plan includes initiatives to establish statewide early learning and development standards; develop a Comprehensive Assessment System to assess the progress of young children; use Child Care Health Consultants to identify and address health and developmental needs of young children; invest in a home-visit program for high-risk children; provide professional development programs for early childhood educators; and create a database of Kindergarten Entry Assessments for all North Carolina children.

According to a study conducted by the University of Notre Dame, high student mobility (that is, students switching schools in the middle of the year) has negative consequences both for the students who move

and for the students who don't. While many causes of student mobility are beyond the school district's control, providing transportation for students who have moved can allow them to continue to attend the same school.

uAspire is a non-profit based in Boston that partners with schools and community organizations to provide free financial aid advice to students and their families. By providing ongoing financial guidance from middle school through college graduation, uAspire seeks to make college financially accessible to all students who are motivated to attend. uAspire advisors work one-on-one with high school seniors to assist with FAFSA and to negotiate aid packages with colleges and universities. According to the uAspire website ([www.uaspireusa.org](http://www.uaspireusa.org)), the organization leverages \$62 in financial aid for every \$1 invested in senior advising. Other non-profits, such as College Possible ([www.collegepossible.org](http://www.collegepossible.org)), offer free after-school test prep and college application advice to high school juniors and seniors. A study by Harvard University shows that College Possible participants are twice as likely as other low-income students to enroll in a four-year college.

### **State of Affairs**

Many children in Davidson County are not prepared to enter kindergarten due to the lack of high-quality early childhood education for low-income and at-risk families. Research supports how critical ages 0-5 are across all domains of cognitive and emotional learning and development. Poor quality child care contributes to toxic stress and poor school readiness outcomes.

Many MNPS students do not stay in the same school for the entire academic year. The total district mobility rate in 2008-09 was 35 percent. Eleven schools had rates above 50 percent, and economically disadvantaged, ELL and special education subgroups all had rates around 44 percent.

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In the 2010 CYMP Youth Survey, 86 percent of high school youth surveyed indicated a desire to pursue a professional, 2-year or 4-year college degree. However, only 33 percent of MNPS students score at least a 21 on the ACT, which is the minimum score required to qualify for the Hope Scholarship. In nine MNPS high schools, the average composite ACT score is below 19, which is the minimum requirement for admission to a TN public university. According to a 2007 report by the National College Access Network, 9th grade students in MNPS have just a 32.5 percent chance of attending college right after high school. MNPS graduation rates need improvement across all subgroups, especially among Hispanic, black and male students.

### Recommendations

To increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for low-income and at-risk children, we recommend increasing the number of preschool classrooms in MNPS and inviting the Educare network, a non-profit that supports high-quality early learning, to start a center in Nashville. A parent education initiative to spread awareness of the importance of Pre-K education could further increase Pre-K enrollment. Providing professional development opportunities for Pre-K educators and reviewing current research on best practices in Pre-K instruction would ensure high quality of programs.

District mobility rates will be reduced if more students utilize the continuity option available to MNPS students who relocate during the school year. The first step is increasing parent and school awareness of this option. The next step is to review MNPS transportation and enrollment policies to identify barriers to the use of the continuity option. To overcome transportation barriers, we recommend the creation of a hub and spoke transportation system to help students get to school from anywhere in the city.

To increase college access for low-income and first-generation students, we recommend that every high school have at least one college and career counselor whose explicit role is to support students in successfully transitioning to college and career opportunities. We also suggest exploring collaborative opportunities between MNPS and local colleges, universities and community programs to support students' college aspirations. Finally, there is a need for increased community awareness of the financial aid and college planning supports available for low-income and first-generation students.



### GOAL OUTCOMES NINE AND TEN

**All children and youth will be physically healthy. They will learn and practice healthy habits and have access to the resources that support these habits.**

#### Key Objectives

- Decrease the number of low birth weight babies and the infant mortality rate;
- Improve birth outcomes for infants of teen parents;
- Increase the number of babies who are breast-fed;
- Increase the number of children and youth who receive the recommended number of well-child visits;
- Increase the number of insured children and youth (particularly youth in poverty);
- Decrease the number of teens who use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs;
- Increase the number of teens who demonstrate responsible decision-making regarding sexual behaviors;
- Increase the number of children educated in pregnancy prevention;
- Increase the number of children and youth who eat recommended amounts of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and reduce the number who consume sugary beverages;
- Increase the number of children and youth who get the recommended amount of physical activity; and
- Increase the number of children and youth with a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI).

#### Best Practices

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publishes reports on best practices for reducing infant mor-

tality and improving birth outcomes. One success story is Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), a home-visit program that partners high-risk first-time mothers with registered nurses. Home visits begin in early pregnancy and continue through the child's second birthday. The program has been evaluated extensively and has proven effective at improving mothers' prenatal behaviors, reducing pregnancy complications, reducing child injuries, increasing spacing between first and second children, and reducing child behavioral problems. NFP has already been implemented in over 400 communities across the country, including Memphis and Knoxville.

In 2000, the government of New York City created HealthStat, a program designed to increase enrollment of eligible New Yorkers in public health insurance. Children made up approximately one-fourth of this target group. The program provides neighborhood outreach to uninsured populations and offers enrollment assistance in convenient community locations. Since its inception, HealthStat has contributed to a 62 percent increase in the number of NYC residents enrolled in public health insurance.

The Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice has compiled a list of effective programs for reducing youth substance abuse. Effective school-based programs begin in elementary school and continue through high school. Common elements of these programs include developing students' personal and social skills; teaching stress management and conflict resolution; providing age-appropriate information about the consequences of alcohol and drug use; and getting families and the community involved in substance abuse prevention. School-based prevention programs are most effective when they are delivered over the course of at least ten sessions in a single school year, with follow-up sessions in successive years. Involving more students in drug-free after school activities is also an effective method of reducing substance abuse.



In 2003, the *Journal of Extension*, the official peer-reviewed journal of the U.S. Cooperative Extension System, published a handbook on best practices for preventing teen pregnancy. These practices include ensuring access to reproductive health services, providing sexuality and AIDS education, involving family members in pregnancy prevention, addressing the role of males in unwanted pregnancies, increasing employment opportunities for teens, and engaging teens in service learning activities.

The Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture created the HealthierUS School Challenge in 2004 to recognize schools that do an outstanding job of promoting good nutrition and physical activity. Since then, more than 4,400 schools across the country have been recognized for their efforts. These winning schools have assembled a set of best practices for improving children's nutrition. These include consulting dietetic interns to help with menu planning, including kids in menu planning,

implementing menu changes gradually so that kids hardly notice, and holding local lunch days that highlight locally grown food. Specific food recommendations include gradually replacing iceberg lettuce with romaine, using pureed beans in baked goods to reduce fat content by 75 percent (apparently the kids don't even notice!), and creating recipes for beans and lentils.

The Prevention Institute, a California non-profit dedicated to addressing today's most pressing health and safety concerns, assembled a report on best practices for increasing physical activity among children and youth. To increase physical activity within schools, the institute recommends requiring daily physical education classes taught by trained PE specialists for students in all grades. Class sizes should be kept small (<30 students) and PE curricula should focus on maximizing moderate-to-vigorous activity during each lesson. To increase physical activity during out-of-school time, after school programs should incor-

porate at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily. Expanding access to affordable youth sports programs is also an effective strategy.

### State of Affairs

Infant mortality in Davidson County is higher than the U.S. average and is 2.5 times higher in the African American community. Infants of mothers with a high school education or less and infants in households with incomes of less than \$25,000 are most vulnerable (TN Dept of Health, 2009).

At least one-third of young children do not receive the recommended number of well-child visits. Among adolescents, the proportion is even higher. Eighteen percent of youth in poverty do not have health insurance, and 30 percent of young adults (ages 19-21) are uninsured.

According to the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 64.8 percent of youth ages 13-19 have engaged in alcohol consumption, 53 percent have tried smoking, and 40 percent have used marijuana. Thirty percent of youth reported having been offered an illegal drug on school property. Over 47 percent of Davidson County high school youth have had sexual intercourse, and the rate of teen pregnancy in Davidson County is 5.5 percent, compared to 3.4 percent in Tennessee. Though the rate of teen pregnancy has dropped in recent years, rates of STIs are still high.

A large percentage of economically disadvantaged citizens live in areas where healthy food is not readily available, which contributes to higher rates of obesity and health problems for this population. According to the Metro Public Health Department, 26 percent of children and youth in Davidson County are overweight or obese. Approximately 78 percent of high school youth do not engage in at least one hour of physical activity a day, which is the Surgeon General's recommendation, and one-third of Davidson County youth ages 13-19 report more than 3 hours of TV watching per night (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2007).

### Recommendations

To decrease the number of low birth weight babies and reduce infant mortality, we recommend utilizing the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) to explore community specific causes of infant mortality and develop community-based intervention. This review program was developed by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. To improve birth outcomes for infants of teen parents, MNPS should implement a Pregnant and Parenting Teens advisory group at all high schools to offer support to pregnant teens. The program should include a voluntary pregnancy self-reporting system that can link students with services. To increase the number of babies who are breast-fed, we suggest developing a strategy to collect local data on breastfeeding and developing an MNPS policy to support students who are breastfeeding.

To increase the number of children and youth who receive the recommended number of well-child visits, we propose utilizing schools to increase parent awareness of health care options for their children. MNPS should consider adopting a policy that would require well-child exams for middle and high school attendance. Finally, there should be more convenient opportunities for teens to access free or low-cost health services, including school-based options, after-hours and weekend opportunities.

To increase the number of insured children and youth (particularly youth in poverty), we recommend enhancing outreach regarding insurance eligibility and enrollment. Doing this could involve utilizing public schools, pediatric ERs, and other points of first contact within the medical care system to inform families of options; increasing awareness of eligibility through TENNderCARE and other agencies; and developing polices that link students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches with insurance enrollment.

To decrease the number of teens who use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, we advise using continuous, repetitive messages, particularly from individuals with

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cultural credibility, to increase awareness of the risks of tobacco and drug use. These messages should be integrated into schools and out-of-school environments where teens spend their time. We also recommend implementing regular, systematic checks with alcohol retailers to ensure compliance with Youth Access Laws; incorporating alcohol and other drug assessments into well-teen exams; and increasing the number of alcohol/drug free venues for youth and young adults.

To increase the number of teens who demonstrate responsible decision-making regarding sexual behaviors and to increase the number of youth educated in pregnancy prevention, teens must have access both to accurate information and to reproductive health services. To better understand the problem, we recommend implementing the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in middle schools as well as high schools so that more information is available on what risky behaviors teens of different ages are engaging in. To increase teens' access to accurate information regarding sexual responsibility, we recommend creating a social media resource for youth where they can find relevant information and have their questions answered anonymously; and training educators and out-of-school-time program providers so that they are more comfortable providing age-appropriate information on sexual responsibility. To ensure that parents also have sufficient access to information, we suggest increasing educational programming to parents, increasing community-based education aimed at providing additional resources outside of schools, and expanding hours in Family Resource Centers to provide additional opportunities for youth and their families to seek information or services. To increase teen access to reproductive health service providers, we advise expanding health clinics in high schools and utilizing community-based clinics to provide access to services during out-of-school time.

To increase child and youth consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and decrease consump-



tion of sugary beverages, we suggest increasing awareness of the importance and benefits of healthy eating and ensuring adequate availability of healthy food options. Strategies to increase availability of healthy food include hiring an expert consultant to study feasibility and make recommendations for policy changes to increase healthy food options and decrease unhealthy food in Metro schools; ensuring adoption and implementation of healthy eating policies for Head Start programs and preschools; and expanding availability of affordable healthy foods via school and community gardens. Efforts could be coordinated with the Healthy Places Project Community Action Plan, which includes several strategies to increase availability of healthy foods in schools and neighborhoods.

To increase physical activity among children and youth and to increase the number of children and youth with a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI), we recommend developing daily physical education requirements; increasing support for out-of-school-time programming that promotes physical activity; and developing a data collection system for measuring and monitoring student BMI. These efforts, too, could be coordinated with the Healthy Places Project Community Action Plan.

Finally, we recommend a number of strategies that address all health objectives for children and youth. These include equipping each school with a Coordinated School Health Team to ensure coordination of health education, physical education, health services, nutrition services, counseling and psychological services, healthy school environment, and health promotion for staff; developing and implementing a brief Core Curriculum to orient educators and out-of-school-time providers to health issues and available resources for children and youth; developing and implementing a brief Core Curriculum in physical and mental health for parents and guardians; and enhancing communication with medical providers to promote healthy behaviors and timely well-child exams.

### Action Taken

- Metro Nashville Health Department's (MNHD) Family Youth and Infant Health coordinates programs and initiatives that focus on the health of children, infants and improving birth outcomes. The goals of these programs are to make Nashville the healthiest city for children, while also reducing our infant mortality rates and eliminating perinatal health disparities. The infant mortality initiatives include Project Blossom, a community coalition around infant health, as well as a Fetal Infant Mortality Review program, aimed to better understand factors that affect birth outcomes
  - <http://www.nashville.gov/Health-Department/Family-Youth-and-Infant-Health/Maternal-Child-Health-Initiatives.aspx>
- MNHD's fatherhood program is called the New Life Fatherhood Program (NLP). This program seeks to provide fathers with the skills, knowledge and support they need to become more positively involved in the lives of their children in order to maximize the health and well-being of Nashville's families. NLP provides comprehensive services including parenting education, relationship

building, life skills training, employment and educational resources, risk reduction case management, economic stability support and mentoring in order to encourage successful fatherhood, and maximize the physical, emotional and academic well-being of their children

- <http://www.nashville.gov/Health-Department/Family-Youth-and-Infant-Health/New-Life-Fatherhood-Program.aspx>
- MNPS Nutrition Services coordinates several school-based community gardens. The 47 school gardens in the MNPS system are using gardens as a hands-on method of teaching Nutrition as well as core subjects such as Science, Reading, Math, Social Studies and the Arts. A school-based garden can be a few demonstration raised beds or a one acre farm like the Bellevue Edible Learning Lab at Bellevue Middle School. At any scale, school gardens have been proven to increase fruit and vegetable consumption as well as school achievement scores.
  - <http://www.mnps.org/Page85165.aspx>

### GOAL OUTCOME ELEVEN

## All children and youth will be mentally healthy and emotionally well.

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children and youth who receive evaluation and referral for behavioral, mental, and emotional health issues;
- Increase the number of youth who receive needed behavioral, mental and emotional health services;
- Reduce suicidal ideation, attempts and completions by youth; and
- Increase the availability of emotional support and mental health services for homeless children, youth and young adults.

### Best Practices

The University of Maryland School Mental Health Program (SMHP) has been serving youth in Baltimore schools since 1989 and has achieved national recognition for its effectiveness. Through school-based health centers, SMHP provides services such as individual, group and family counseling; psychiatric consultation; classroom presentations and prevention activities; mental health evaluations; support and professional development for teachers; and crisis intervention. The School Health Interdisciplinary Program (SHIP), also affiliated with the University of Maryland, provides over 30 intensive training sessions annually for teachers and other youth-serving professionals dedicated to improving student mental health and wellness.

### State of Affairs

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one in five children have a mental health problem and one in ten have a serious emotional disturbance. These rates are higher among children in poverty. Almost half of homeless school-age children suffer from depression, anxiety or aggression (The Institute for Children and Poverty). Unfortunately, 75 percent of youth needing mental health services do not receive them.

In the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 27.5 percent of Nashville high-school youth reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that it stopped them



*Photo courtesy of Nashville Civic Design Center*



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from doing some of their usual activities. Twelve percent of high-school-aged youth surveyed reported that they had seriously considered suicide within the past 12 months, and another 12 percent had made at least one suicide attempt.

### Recommendations

To increase the number of children and youth who receive evaluation and referral for behavioral, mental, and emotional health issues, we recommend training educators and out-of-school-time service providers in the recognition of and referral for these issues. In addition to training, this effort should involve distributing a resource guide to educators regarding behavioral, mental and emotional issues.

To increase the number of youth who receive needed behavioral, mental and emotional health services, these services must be available in convenient and non-threatening locations. We suggest investigating the possibility of scaling up the community school model of group treatment being conducted at Glencliff High School.

To reduce suicidal thoughts and attempts and to increase the availability of emotional support and mental health services for homeless children and youth, we recommend conducting community data analysis to identify at-risk groups for targeted screening and intervention. We also suggest implementing mental health screenings in facilities providing physical health care.

#### GOAL OUTCOME TWELVE

**All children and youth will have access to and participate in quality programs during out-of-school time.**

#### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of parents, children, and youth who are aware of what is offered in the community during out-of-school time;
- Increase the number of children and youth who participate in high-quality out-of-school-time activities or service learning opportunities;
- Increase the balance of offerings with regard to creative-based, academic-based and physical ac-



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tivity-based programs for children and youth; and

- Increase the number of special needs and ELL children and youth in quality out-of-school-time programs/activities.

### Best Practices

Using information from its Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Database, the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) compiled a list of the most effective strategies for increasing youth participation in after school programs. These strategies include reaching out directly to youth and their parents (i.e. employing phone calls, student presentations, and street outreach rather than posters or flyers); matching program schedules to youth's needs; allocating program slots for at-risk youth and recruiting students to fill these slots; recruiting groups or pairs of students to participate in programs together; employing energetic, trustworthy program staff; offering a wide variety of activities, including both highly structured and less-structured activities; linking academic enrichment with engaging projects; and offering opportunities for leadership, community service and paid employment.

### State of Affairs

In the 2010 CYMP Community Survey, 77 percent of respondents felt that the Nashville community does not provide enough opportunities for children and youth to participate in out-of-school-time activities. Compounding the problem, many parents and youth are unaware of the quality out-of-school time programs that do exist. Of the students who participated in the 2010 CYMP Youth Survey, 67 percent reported that they participate in organized activities outside of school such as sports teams, after-school programs, community groups and faith-based groups. However, only 10 percent of Nashville's 15,000 low-income middle school students participate in structured after-school activities. Students who have transportation and are able to pay fees have more out-of-school-time options available to them. Disparities are espe-



*Photo courtesy of Gary Layda*

cially severe during the summer. While a wide variety of camps and other summer programs are available, most of these cost \$250-\$350 per week and do not provide transportation, making them inaccessible to many low-income children and youth.

### Recommendations

To increase parent and youth awareness of out-of-school-time programs, we recommend creating a web-based, user-friendly database with information for parents, youth and the community regarding programs (including current and upcoming events, classes, camps, field trips, etc.), locations, cost, scholarship availability and bus routes to program or service site. Metro should investigate the possibility of contracting a third party to create and maintain this database. We also recommend establishing a study group of youth, Metro agencies, and youth-serving agencies to determine the feasibility of a Youth Mapping Project. This project would engage youth to canvass their neighborhoods to gather information on programs for children and youth. The information gathered would then be compiled into a GIS (geographic information system) mapped database of youth programs.

To increase the number of children and youth who participate in high quality out-of-school-time activities and to increase the balance of offerings, we recommend creating a comprehensive Out-of-School Time Network to build a coherent system, coordinate resources and deliver unique and diverse programs for children and youth of all ages and abilities. This network would be modeled after the Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) for middle school students and would include the Mayor's Office of Children and Youth, MNPS, Metro Parks and Recreation, the Nashville Public Library, and community organizations that serve youth. It would establish uniform criteria or standards of quality for evaluating out-of-school-time programs. It could also evaluate the potential to utilize schools and community centers as connectors for out-of-school-time programs and activities to address transportation barriers. To fund this program, we suggest identifying and soliciting national foundations such as the Wallace Foundation for planning and implementation grants. We also recommend creating a dedicated fund of public and private contributions (leveraging local, state, and federal funding) to implement and support the Out-of-School Time Network.

To increase the number of special needs and ELL children and youth in quality out-of-school-time programs and activities, we advise creating quality standards for out-of-school-time programs that include standards for ELL and special needs youth and creating a campaign to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities and ELL students in out-of-school-time programming. To train program directors and staff to effectively support students with special needs, we suggest partnering with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Britt Henderson Training Series, an annual series of workshops providing training for general and special education teachers with the goal of improving the quality of education for students with diverse learning needs in inclusive settings.

### Action Taken

- Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) supports several dozen afterschool providers in 4 geographic "afterzones," serving about 750 middle school students. Programs include both school and neighborhood sites. Standards and indicators of afterschool program quality, as well as Nashville's 5 Principles of Positive Youth Development, were created by 25 community agencies and 8 Metro departments working collaboratively. More than 100 agencies have participated in over 6,500 hours of professional development training to increase skills in working with youth.

Afterschool programming for K-8 has also been prioritized by Metro Schools, with federal US-DOE funding, as part of its roll-out of community schools.

Out-of-School offerings have been extended into the summer, through the Mayor's Scholars Academy. Rising 9th and 10th graders currently receive supports to prepare them for graduation and post-secondary for 4 weeks each summer.

### GOAL OUTCOME THIRTEEN

**All children and youth will have outdoor spaces in their neighborhood that provide opportunities for play and recreational activities.**

### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children, youth and families who utilize parks and green spaces;
- Increase the number of neighborhoods that have a playground within 0.5 miles, a green space within one mile, and an athletic field within two miles.

### Best Practices

In addition to building new public parks, local governments can increase access to parks and green spaces by requiring new housing developments to incorporate open recreation space and by establishing joint use agreements with public schools to open playgrounds after school hours for community use. To make parks easier to get to, they should be connected to residential areas by safe walkways, bike paths, and public transit. Offering structured recreation programming in public parks increases both usage and safety. (Source: Healthy Eating Active Living Convergence Partnership)

### State of Affairs

Outdoor play and recreation is important to the development and well-being of children and youth. According to the Metro Parks 2008 Master Plan Update, 12 out of 14 Nashville sub-areas have a deficit of neighborhood parks.

### Recommendations

The CYMP contains no recommendations for achieving Outcome 13.

### Action Taken

- Mayor's Field Day with the Tennessee Titans was created as a new event in 2012. Mayor's Field Day was created as an event specifically geared towards Nashville's youth. It is designed for families and individuals of diverse fitness levels. Participants are engaged in a relaxed, tournament-type event designed around learning new, fun, kid-friendly ways to be active. Attendees will enjoy creative games, a fitness fair and the chance to meet and interact with Tennessee Titans players and T-Rac. In an effort to get our youngest Nashvillians and their families excited about moving and being active, the Mayor's Field Day experience is open to the public free of charge.

○ <http://mayorsfieldday.com/>

- Nashville's Greenway system, begun in 1992, demonstrates that Nashville places a high priority on protecting and linking open space and building greenway trails for both recreation and transportation. There are over 190 miles of trails in Davidson County. These include over 50 miles of off-street (primarily paved) multi-use greenway trails and various other types of trails within parks for walking, hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use. The trails provide options for all categories of users, including children and youth.
  - <http://www.nashville.gov/Parks-and-Recreation/Greenways-and-Trails.aspx>
- NashVitality is an initiative funded through the Metro Public Health Department (MPHD), Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant. The



*Photo courtesy of Gary Layda*

grant was awarded to Nashville by the Department of Health and Human Services, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. NashVitality celebrates the spirit creating healthy, active and green communities in Nashville through a variety of initiatives. In furtherance of its goals, the NashVitality app is a mobile guide to a healthy, active and green lifestyle in Nashville. Inside this app there are interactive maps for all types of activities including walking, hiking, biking, water access, and much more.

- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nashvitality/id570121875?mt=8>

### GOAL OUTCOME FOURTEEN

**All children and youth will have safe transportation options that allow them to engage in activities, and access services and supports that the community has to offer.**

#### Key Objectives

- Increase the number of children and youth who have access to transportation options other than their parents for before school activities, after school activities, and to school;
- Increase the number of youth who practice safe driving habits;
- Increase the number of children, youth and families who have safe walking conditions in their neighborhoods; and
- Increase the number of children, youth, and families with access to bicycles and safe biking options on Metro Nashville streets.

#### Best Practices

The current transportation infrastructure in most of the U.S. is focused on travel in private automobiles. Youth, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled are disproportionately affected by the lack of safe and efficient alternatives to automobile travel. The Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention have created a set of recommended policies for addressing this lack of transportation options. They recommend expanding public transportation by establishing bus rapid-transit or light rail systems, placing bus stops in safe and convenient locations that are accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists, and allocating more funding to public transit. They also recommend promoting active transportation (walking and biking) by providing well-lit sidewalks, bike paths, “complete streets” (roads that are safe and convenient for all users, including cars, buses, bikes and pedestrians) and safe roadway crossings. Finally, they suggest incorporating pedestrian and bicycle master plans into city general plans.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, effective strategies for reducing teen traffic fatalities include media campaigns to promote seatbelt use, reducing youth access to alcohol, enforcing Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) programs, and getting parents involved in setting standards for safe driving.

#### State of Affairs

Lack of transportation significantly limits a young person’s ability to participate in out-of-school-time activities and volunteer opportunities. It also prevents students who relocate within Nashville from taking advantage of the school continuity option and remaining in the same school. Many youth and parents are not aware of the transportation options available to them, and transportation services are not always scheduled during the times that best meet the needs of youth. In the 2010 CYMP Youth Survey, 56 percent of high school students surveyed said they had used public transportation in the last 12 months. Of those who had used public transit, only 38 percent said that their experience was good and that the system works well most of the time. Fewer teens using public transit mean more teens behind the wheel, which can have deadly consequences. The Nashville-Murfreesboro region ranks fourth in the nation for

fatal teen crashes, which are the leading cause of teen death (Allstate Insurance Study, 2008).

### Recommendations

To increase the number of children and youth who have access to transportation options other than their parents, we recommend that MTA coordinate with MNPS, religious institutions, community centers and youth-serving nonprofits to adjust existing routes and vehicles to better serve student and parent after school schedules. As part of the coordination effort, we suggest a city-wide “Youth-Serving Agency Transportation Summit” to create a comprehensive network of transportation resources for youth and parents. MTA should expand its services with a focus on the needs of youth. The following expansions should have top priority: Route #43 to link Maplewood with Hunters Lane and White Creek; Route #4 Stratford extension to Gallatin Pike; and Pearl Cohn expansion to connect students to west Nashville and West End. More general recommendations include adding crosstown and neighborhood feeder routes to reduce travel time and increase access to transit; extending weekday afternoon peak service through 7:30pm on select routes to accommodate after-school and after-work activities; and reducing youth fares.

To increase the number of youth who practice safe driving habits, we recommend increasing opportunities for students to receive driver education. This could involve having MNPS offer driver education to high school students and/or utilizing community centers to provide driver education services (AAA currently offers this program in other states, but not yet in Tennessee). To increase awareness of driver safety issues and accident prevention practices, Metro could launch a coordinated public relations effort utilizing police, fire, and the Metro Health Department to create a safe driving demonstration program to be presented at both public and private high schools in the Nashville area.

### Action Taken

- The Metro Transit Authority (MTA) has a program called Quest Youth Services that gives bus passes to children who are eligible for free and reduced lunch – the passes can be used not only to get to and from school, but also for after school activities and work.
  - <http://www.readyby21.org/case-studies/readysnaps-nashville>
  - <http://www.nashvillemta.org/news/pub142.pdf>