

OVERVIEW

of Blueprint for Early Childhood Success



① **THE PROBLEM:** **2 in 3** NASHVILLE THIRD-GRADERS ARE **NOT** READING ON GRADE LEVEL.

② **WHY THIRD-GRADE READING MATTERS:**

When a child misses this milestone, their chances of success are dramatically curtailed.



1 in 6 will drop out of high school without a diploma



They earn half the annual income of their peers



They have higher incidences of arrest or incarceration

The chance of catching them up when they miss this milestone is very limited. Consequently, these students face a cascading number of other personal and social challenges that travel with them their entire lives.

③ **CREATING THE BLUEPRINT:**

We knew there was great work being done in the city and across the nation. Our goal was to unify those efforts and best practices into a cohesive and actionable plan for Nashville.

● Convened a 22-member working group.

● Simultaneously, Mayor's Childhood Education Working Group focused on how to improve pre-K.

● We challenged ourselves to think bigger, dig deeper, and come up with a plan to accelerate action.

1,600
HOURS OF
RESEARCH

24
WEEKS
TIMELINE

200+
COMMUNITY
LEADERS' INPUT

30+
NATIONAL EXPERTS'
BEST PRACTICES

From this, the NLC developed a strategic plan to **DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF THIRD-GRADERS READING ON LEVEL BY 2025.**

4 HOW THIS IS DIFFERENT:

- ▶ For the first time, the city is coming together under a shared framework and outcome to end a social injustice that has persisted for more than two decades.
- ▶ These recommendations have the full support and commitment of the group to ensure they do not sit on a bookshelf collecting dust. We will publicly report on progress annually, creating a mechanism for an honest public dialogue about what's working and what's not.
- ▶ While many conversations about literacy start and end with K–12 solutions, this report acknowledges the problem is a community challenge. With this comprehensive, birth-through-third-grade plan, Nashville joins a small group of cities in the country who have adopted a true community literacy approach.

5 A SAMPLE OF STRATEGIES:

The plan includes 29 recommendations that cut across a range of issues, organizations and needs. Below are highlights of just some of the findings and key recommendations that will move the needle for Nashville's students:

▶ BETTER ADDRESS NEEDS OF FAMILIES AND KIDS 0–3

FINDING: Ninety percent of a child's brain develops before the age of 5 with the most significant period of development occurring from birth to age 3. Other studies show that the number of words a child knows by age 3 can be an indicator of later literacy success. Yet, Nashville is not investing enough in family supports during this critical period.

STRATEGY: Piggyback on successful efforts like the Imagination Library to make sure we aren't just providing books, but making sure every child is read to regularly and engaged in conversation that builds literacy skills.

EXAMPLES: For families without a confident reader at home, couple books with additional resources such as technology accompaniments that would enable the child to hear the book read to them, games families can play at home, ways to hear the book read in multiple languages, creation of more read-aloud opportunities in neighborhoods, partnering with pediatricians and medical clinics, churches, barber shops, retailers, etc.

▶ IMPROVE QUALITY AND ACCESS TO PRE-K:

FINDING: Kids without high-quality early childhood experiences are 25 percent more likely to drop out of school and 60 percent less likely to attend college. In addition to quality concerns, we are also unable meet the demand for pre-K services. This gap will continue to widen as the city grows.

STRATEGY: Clearly define the standards for high-quality pre-K and walk it out to both private and public providers. In addition, unify the enrollment system so parents can see and evaluate all of their options in one place and choose the best fit for their child and family.

EXAMPLES: Mayor Megan Barry's plan clearly lays out a set of uniform standards and best practices for high-quality pre-K that apply to MNPS, Head Start and community-based organizations. Integrating these practices into programs will ensure that children have access to an education that prepares them for success in school and life and creating a unified enrollment system that makes it easier for parents to find a great pre-K for their child.

SUPPORT THE DISTRICT’S ABILITY TO DEVELOP A BEST-IN-NATION APPROACH TO LITERACY:

FINDING: The district has tried a number of strategies and tactics over the last 25 years, which have yet to substantially move the needle on literacy achievement for MNPS students.

STRATEGY: Strengthen the foundation of strong literacy instruction within schools and classrooms by supporting teachers with the right resources and training, while thinking outside the box on ways to engage community partners and families to support literacy.

EXAMPLES: MNPS has committed to initiating an enhanced literacy support pilot in six elementary schools beginning in January 2018 (Buena Vista, Churchwell, Cumberland, Glengarry, Lillard and Paragon Mills). The pilot will incubate and measure the effects of multiple recommendations, so that we can rapidly scale and spread the most effective practices across all elementary schools.

PROVIDE A WIDE VARIETY OF BOOKS AND RESOURCES TO MEET KIDS’ LEARNING NEEDS:

FINDING: A critical piece of learning to read is ensuring kids have access to high-interest books on a range of reading levels. Yet, once a child ages out of Imagination Library, there are few systemic efforts to get books into families’ homes. Moreover, half of all elementary school classrooms have fewer than 100 books with many having next to none. That is a particularly devastating situation when you consider that each of these classrooms has approximately 20 to 22 students, all reading on different levels, and most come from homes with limited access to books.

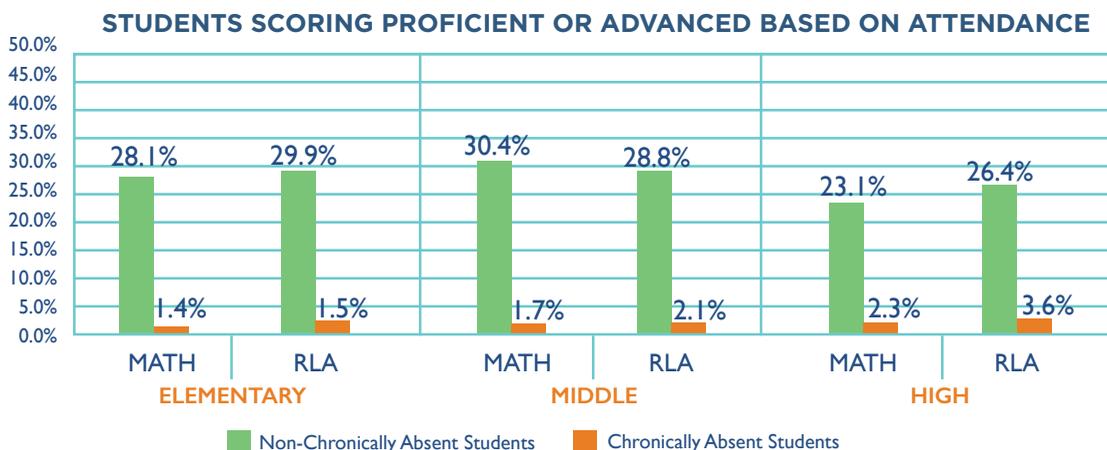
STRATEGY: Expand the reach and scale of programs such as Limitless Libraries and the NPL’s Educator Card program, and build out efforts through public–private partnerships that proactively get books into high-needs homes.

EXAMPLES: Expand access to Limitless Libraries, make it easier for educators to access Limitless Libraries resources for classroom use, fund starter classroom libraries through a public–private joint venture, and support programs focused on increasing access to high-interest content in classrooms, in the community and at home.

CONFRONT CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM:

FINDING: Some 16-25 percent of elementary school students are chronically absent. Yet research shows that only 2 percent of chronically absent students will score proficient or advanced in reading or math. The bottom line is that being in school matters, yet we are facing rampant challenges with chronic absenteeism most of our schools.

STRATEGY: Prioritize chronic absenteeism as a key lever to increasing literacy achievement. Leverage national best practices to create a comprehensive strategy that incorporates key activities for both MNPS and community partners.



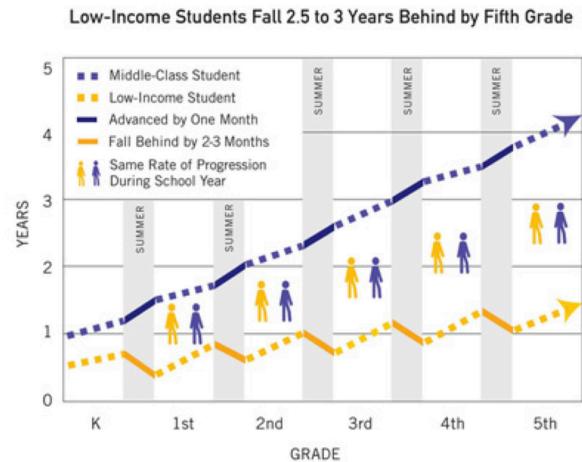
EXAMPLES: Use enhanced data tracking to give parents a comparison or benchmark that helps them understand what it means to be chronically absent. Create a public awareness campaign that makes weekly perfect attendance a family goal. Provide case management services to support families who are missing 25 percent or more of school days.

CURB SUMMER LEARNING LOSS:

FINDING: Students from low-income homes lose an average of two months of reading achievement every summer. By the end of elementary school, summer learning loss puts these students more than two years behind more affluent students. The reality is that many of our students spend their summers in homes with few, if any, books.

STRATEGY: Create a network of summer supports in high-needs neighborhoods and increase access to high-quality summer learning programming. If we want to help these students read more over the summer, or for families to take advantage of learning opportunities, we must take the opportunity to them.

EXAMPLES: Keep MNPS libraries open with special summer hours to provide more access to books closer to home, partner with nonprofits to send kids home with books for the summer that they picked out to foster their unique interests and personal love for reading, proactively connect summer camp and care providers with turnkey resources to embed literacy activities into their programs, and increase the number of summer literacy program seats by at least 20 percent.



ALIGN LITERACY WORK WITH AFTER-SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROVIDERS:

FINDING: The work of community partners and programs is not aligned with the districts efforts. There is a lack of awareness, understanding and training to enable community programming to better connect with MNPS and build on what students are doing in the classroom.

STRATEGY: Create information-sharing systems between MNPS and community partners. Use consistent research-based standards, measurable student outcomes and support structures to help providers better supplement classroom learning.

EXAMPLES: NAZA has established a shared understanding of what quality after-school programming is required in middle schools. Work with NAZA to explore expanding that model into elementary schools or creating alternative pathways for achieving the same end.

6 MORE THAN JUST THE WHAT:

Perhaps just as significant as identifying what needs to be done to boost early literacy achievement, the Blueprint also tackles head on larger changes needed to how we work together as a community to address these issues. They recommend a suite of activities aimed at making sure everyone is working better together, aligning efforts across organizations and platforms, and creating a system of mutual accountability.

Specifically, the working group members committed to coming together annually to publicly review progress and discuss honestly what's working and what's not and what needs to change.

To read all of the findings and strategies, visit blueprintforearlychildhoodsuccess.com.