

Tennessee Schools On Notice 2001-02



System Report: Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

John G. Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Education Accountability
September 2002



STATE OF TENNESSEE

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September 16, 2002

The Honorable John S. Wilder

Speaker of the Senate

The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh

Speaker of the House of Representatives

and

Members of the House and Senate Education Committees

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Tennessee Code Annotated 49-1-602 requires the Office of Education Accountability and the Tennessee Department of Education to conduct a joint study of schools and/or systems placed on notice of probation. In September 2001, the Department and the State Board of Education officially placed 98 schools in 11 systems on notice. This system report is one of 11 addressing the affected school systems.

OEA analysts reviewed aspects of each system, other than curriculum and instruction, which current research indicates may affect student achievement, including governance and management, funding and resources, parent and community involvement, and facility condition. Each report provides recommendations for improvement.

Sincerely,

John G. Morgan

Comptroller of the Treasury

cc: Commissioner Faye Taylor
Department of Education

Tennessee Schools On Notice 2001-02



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The Office of Education Accountability was created in the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury by *Tennessee Code Annotated* 4-3-308 to monitor the performance of school boards, superintendents, school districts, schools, and school personnel in accordance with the performance standards set out in the Education Improvement Act or by regulations of the State Board of Education. The office is to conduct such studies, analyses, or audits as it may determine necessary to evaluate education performance and progress, or as may be assigned to it by the Governor or General Assembly.

Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Education Accountability,
Authorization Number 307296-03, 115 copies, September 2002. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$2.18 per copy.

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METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

In 2001, the Tennessee Department of Education identified 98 schools in 11 systems needing to improve student academic performance. The State Board of Education approved the list in September, and the commissioner officially placed the schools on notice. Nine schools in the Metro Nashville Public Schools are now on notice:

- East Middle School
- Kirkpatrick Elementary School
- Maplewood Comprehensive High School
- Pearl-Cohn Comprehensive High School and Business Magnet
- Shwab Elementary School
- Stratford Comprehensive High School
- Warner Elementary School
- West End Middle School
- Whites Creek Comprehensive High School

Once schools are on notice, *Tennessee Code Annotated* 49-1-602 requires the Department of Education and the Comptroller's Office of Education Accountability to study jointly the schools and/or systems. The study must produce recommendations on how school systems can improve and meet state performance standards. This report is the Office of Education Accountability's portion of the Metro Nashville Public School system study.

The Department of Education and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) determined the two agencies would study schools and systems on notice separately. Each agency designed research protocol to examine areas within its expertise. The department concentrated on curriculum and instruction, and the OEA examined other areas potentially affecting student achievement. The OEA considered the following areas:

- general school, student, and staff information;
- governance and management;
- funding and resources;
- parent, community, and business involvement;
- facilities and climate; and
- class size.

The study addressed individual schools to the extent possible.

The Department of Education contracted with retired educators, referred to as Exemplary Educators, to provide technical assistance to the systems and schools on notice. OEA staff did not meet with Exemplary Educators (EEs) during the joint study because the Department of Education felt interviews with OEA could compromise EEs' relationships with systems and schools. Department of Education staff was also concerned about EEs' time constraints.

Background and Methodology

The 98 Tennessee schools placed on notice failed to meet achievement and growth criteria established by the Tennessee Department of Education under the authority granted in *Tennessee Code Annotated* 49-1-601 – 602, displayed in the following figures. The law states that schools placed on notice must improve student achievement by the end of the first year or be placed on probation. Schools on notice that achieve adequate yearly progress after one year will remain on notice but will be specified as “improving.”¹ Schools unable to achieve adequate yearly progress can be on probation up to two years before facing sanctions such as reconstitution or alternative governance. The following figures display the criteria developed by the Department of Education to identify schools needing improvement.

K-8 Criteria used to place schools on notice:

Achievement criteria

School-wide three-year achievement averages in reading, language arts, and mathematics less than 40 NCE (normal curve equivalent)

Schools on notice have a three-year achievement pattern of 48-73% of their student population in the below average group.

Growth factors (Adequate Yearly Progress)

1. School-wide cumulative three-year value added of 100 percent in reading, language arts, and mathematics
2. Closing the achievement gap by a reduction in the number/percentage of students in the below average group in reading, language arts, mathematics, and writing

Schools on notice failed to meet one or both of the growth factors.

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Accountability)

9-12 Criteria used to place schools on notice:

Achievement criteria

Achievement levels in Algebra I End of Course, 11th grade writing, and ACT composite

Schools identified as on notice had below average achievement in two or more of these areas.

Growth factors

1. Positive Value Added (meeting predicted targets)
2. Closing the achievement gap by a reduction in the number/percentage of students in below average group
3. Positive trend in reducing dropout rate

Schools on notice failed to meet one or more of the growth factors.

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Accountability)

To complete its study, the OEA assigned teams of analysts to the 11 systems with schools on notice. The department provided names of district liaisons who acted as guides through each school system’s administrative structure. At a minimum, staff interviewed the following persons in each system:

- District liaisons designated by Director of Schools

¹ With the passage of the 2001 “No Child Left Behind” Act, Tennessee has merged its accountability system with federal law. According to the merged systems, schools must show improvement for two consecutive years to move off notice completely.

- Department of Education Regional Directors
- Principals of schools on notice

Other district staff members often participated in the interviews or were interviewed individually. OEA staff also:

- Conducted an extensive literature review of school improvement strategies and low performing schools issues.
- Reviewed audits of systems with schools on notice.
- Participated in staff training focused on school visits.
- Observed training for Exemplary Educators conducted by the Department of Education and AEL (contractor for Exemplary Educators program).
- Attended school board meetings in some systems with schools on notice.
- Requested and reviewed available documentation from each system.

The OEA’s study resulted in 11 system reports. Each system report includes background information, strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations.

See Appendix A for a list of persons interviewed and documents reviewed regarding Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. See Appendix B for the current status of schools on notice. See Appendix C for the system’s response to the report.

Common Characteristics of On-notice Schools and State-level Concerns

Common characteristics of low-performing schools

Research indicates that schools with low achievement are disproportionately likely to:

- have a large number of students from low income and minority backgrounds
- be located in communities with significant concentrations of poverty and its associated problems
- have low standards and expectations for their students
- have a weak curriculum
- have limited parental involvement
- employ less experienced and less well-qualified teachers and other instructional staff
- have high staff turnover rates
- have lower morale than in other schools
- have a school environment that lacks order and discipline²

SREB notes that separate studies of school performance in North Carolina and Texas found common characteristics among low-performing schools similar to those listed

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, January 2001, *School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*, Washington, D.C., p. 4.

above: weak leadership, inexperienced teachers, high turnover in faculty, and a lack of focus on state content standards.³

Common characteristics of Tennessee's on-notice schools

OEA staff found that no single system with schools on notice could be characterized by every factor listed above. However, at least some of the factors are true of most of the systems and schools. Several have large numbers of students from low income and minority backgrounds and have large concentrations of poverty in their communities. Most have limited parental involvement, many have high staff turnover rates, and some employ a large number of teachers who are less experienced and less qualified (as shown by the number of teachers with waivers and permits).

In addition, analysts noted two other conditions present among many of Tennessee's on-notice schools: high student mobility and a sense of isolation, even in urban settings. High mobility is shown to lower achievement for individual students, but may also have a general effect of lowering school- and district-wide performance.⁴

Some of the rural on-notice schools are located in extremely geographically isolated areas, with few opportunities for students to experience other settings. Principals at several urban on-notice schools noted that large numbers of their students had limited experiences with opportunities that, in many cases, are geographically near them. Some principals indicated that many Memphis City students had never been in downtown Memphis before, for example, or visited the Memphis Zoo.

State-level findings in Tennessee's systems with schools on notice

An overall analysis of the findings from each of Tennessee's 11 systems with schools on notice during the 2001-02 school year revealed some common issues, which can be grouped into seven major areas:

- student readiness;
- teacher shortages;
- technology;
- school accreditation;
- data challenges;
- funding; and
- placing schools on notice and providing technical assistance.

A separate state-level report provides detailed findings and recommendations regarding these issues. In the 11 system reports, this symbol ☆ denotes an area for which a corresponding conclusion and recommendation appear in the state-level report. The state-level report may be accessed at www.comptroller.state.tn.us/orea/reports or a printed copy may be requested from the Office of Education Accountability at (615)401-7911.

³ Jim Watts, *Getting Results with Accountability: Rating Schools, Assisting Schools, Improving Schools*, Southern Regional Education Board, p. 18.

⁴ David Kerbow, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, "Patterns of Urban Student Mobility and Local School Reform," October 1996, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report05entire.html> (accessed March 14, 2002).

System Background Characteristics

SCHOOLS and STAFF 2000-01	
Number of schools	125
Number of schools on notice	9
Number of teachers	4547
Number of teacher waivers	57
Number of teacher permits	148
Average teacher salary	\$41,700

(Source: *Metro Nashville Public Schools Report Card 2001*)

Student Population 2000-01	
Number of students	68,016
African American	46.1%
Caucasian	45.3%
Other	8.5%
English language learners	5.9%
Special education	15.5%
Free and reduced price lunch	52%

(Source: *Metro Nashville Public Schools Report Card 2001*)

FUNDING 2000-01	
Total expenditures	\$516,475,972
Per-pupil expenditure	\$7,038
Federal revenue	8.9%
State revenue	31.4%
<i>includes BEP state share</i>	<i>\$132,776,000</i>
Local revenue	59.7%
<i>includes BEP local share</i>	<i>\$161,420,000</i>

(Source: *Basic Education Program Spreadsheet 2000-01*; *Tennessee Department of Education Annual Report 2001*, *Metro Nashville Public Schools Report Card 2001*)

The average teacher salary is \$41,700 compared to a statewide average of \$37,431 in the 2000-01 school year. Metro's per-pupil expenditure of \$7,038 is more than the statewide average of \$6,055 but less than the national average of \$7,436. Metro relies less heavily on state funding than many other systems throughout the state, whose average state contribution is 47 percent.⁵

The Metro Nashville public school system receives several grants from federal, state, local, and private sources. Federal grants include Titles I, II, and VI, IDEA, ROTC, Hands on Science, High Schools that Work, Urban Systemic Program, Goals 2000, 21st Century Community Learning, Bridging the Gap, Gear-Up, Drug-Free Schools, Technology Challenge, Technology Literacy, Vocational and Adult Education, Homeless

⁵ Tennessee Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card 2001," <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/rptcrd01/state1.htm> (accessed February 15, 2002).

Education, and Emergency Immigrant grants. State grants include Family Resource Centers, Early Childhood, D.A.R.E., Character Education, Baldrige in Education Edge, and Tennessee Safe Schools grants. In addition, Metro Public Schools receives grant funds from local and private sources such as United Way, Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, Nashville State Technical Institute (NSTI), Toyota, and Bellsouth. In 2000-01, the nine schools on notice accepted almost \$2.3 million in federal, state, and foundation grant funds.⁶

GRANT FUNDS FOR METRO SCHOOLS ON NOTICE, 2000-01	
School Name	Grant Total
East Middle School	\$250,260
Kirkpatrick Elementary School	\$304,437
Maplewood High School	\$237,598
Pearl-Cohn High School	\$443,628
Shwab Elementary School	\$334,194
Stratford High School	\$106,600
Warner Elementary School	\$360,136
West End Middle School	\$217,209
Whites Creek High School	\$43,600
Total	\$2,297,663

(Source: Metro Nashville Public Schools)

The Metro Nashville Public School system expects to receive \$12,792,329 million in Title I funds for the 2002-03 school year for use in high-poverty schools. A recently approved plan would set aside \$639,616 to improve teacher quality and \$127,923 to increase communication with parents. In addition, the district reserved \$1 million to provide transportation to students wishing to transfer out of Metro’s low-performing schools, as mandated by the reauthorized ESEA accountability system for Title I schools. However, district administrators indicate that they have not received many requests for transfers from parents. Metro anticipates needing only about \$200,000 of that reserve to transfer students from Kirkpatrick, Schwab, and Warner elementary schools, the only Metro schools identified by federal performance standards and receiving Title I funds.⁷

Additional System Information

Pedro Garcia became the superintendent of Metro Nashville Public Schools in the summer of 2001. Dr. Garcia and his central office staff, some of whom he recruited from his former district in California, are instituting system-wide reforms with a goal of raising student achievement in every school. The school system’s proposed 2002-03 budget includes significant reallocation of funds to promote these goals. For example, it would increase support for low-performing schools and students and fund 119 new ESL

⁶ Lynn Elam, Department of Federal and Categorical Grants, Metro Nashville Public Schools, “RE: Metro Nashville Schools Grants,” E-mailed to Author, May 9 & 10, 2002.

⁷ Diane Long, “Metro school board approves tentative plan for Title I funds,” *Tennessean*, June 12, 2002.

instructional positions, and it would cut numerous teaching and guidance counselor positions.⁸

Metro schools employ roughly 350 substitute teachers on “normal” days, and that number can double on some high-absence days. A generally tight labor market creates challenges for Metro and for individual schools in both the quantity and quality of teachers available, particularly on the high-absence days.⁹

Metro Schools operates five Family Resource Centers (FRCs).¹⁰ Each center employs a director to oversee daily operations. The system’s FRCs collaborate with various community agencies to provide GED classes, pre-schools, after-school programs, tutoring, mentoring, social service brokering, information and referral services, truancy reduction programs, adult education, job training, and counseling. The James Caycee FRC opened in 1995 and serves five schools, four of which are on notice. The McKissick FRC opened in 1995 and serves one school not on notice.¹¹ The Caldwell Early Childhood Center FRC opened in 1993 and only serves that early childhood center. The Pearl-Cohn FRC opened in 1993 and serves one school on notice. The Maplewood FRC opened in 1995 and serves one school on notice.

For nearly three decades, the school system was under a federal court desegregation order. In 1998, all parties to the desegregation law suit agreed to the School Improvement Plan as a blueprint for resolving the court order, and the court subsequently declared the school system unitary (meaning no longer segregated).¹² Subsequently, Metro Schools discontinued busing students to schools far from the students’ neighborhoods. The School Improvement Plan includes a consistent three-tiered structure, so that all schools are either elementary, middle, or high schools with the same grades at each level, and it includes consistent feeder patterns among those tiers. It also establishes a set of optional schools and programs, including magnet schools, enhanced option schools, cluster design centers, and laboratory schools. Early childhood centers and dropout prevention centers are also part of the plan.¹³

The magnet school program in Metro Schools consists of 12 schools serving over 6,000 children from pre-school through high school. Some of the middle and high schools focus specifically on math and science, arts, or literature, and others offer a comprehensive curriculum using unconventional methods of instruction. Admission to the elementary

⁸ Metropolitan Board of Public Education, *SY 2002-2003 Proposed Student-Based Budget*, May 7, 2002.

⁹ Telephone interview with Pat McNeal, Substitute Teachers Coordinator, Metro Nashville Public Schools, on May 8, 2002.

¹⁰ The General Assembly created a grant program in 1992 to allow local education agencies to establish FRCs to coordinate state and community services to help meet the needs of families with children (TCA §49-2-115).

¹¹ Family Resource Center survey conducted by Office of Education Accountability, Comptroller of the Treasury, Summer 2001.

¹² Telephone interview with Vern Denny, Director of Student Assignment Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools, on May 9, 2002; Order and Final Judgment, 3:55-2094/2956 (U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, filed November 2, 1999).

¹³ Summary of School Improvement Plan, compiled by Marian F. Harrison, Willis & Knight, June 18, 1998.

magnet schools is by lottery, and attendance at one of the elementary magnets provides preference status for admission to certain magnet middle schools. Middle and high school magnets have admissions criteria based on each school's curriculum focus. Some of the middle and high school magnets require an audition or portfolio submission, and others have academic criteria for admission.

Metro has three elementary design centers, Kings Lane and Bellshire Design Centers for Advanced Academics and Lakeview Design Center for Character Education. These design centers are schools built around a specific theme to meet the needs of students in a specific cluster. The Metro School Improvement Plan provided for two additional centers, one elementary and one middle school. The existing design centers serve students in kindergarten through 4th grade. Any Metro student may apply for admission to a design center but students zoned for the cluster in which the design center is located get preference. No design centers are planned in any of the clusters with on-notice schools.

Metro created five Enhanced Option schools: Fall-Hamilton, Napier, Bordeaux, Park Avenue, and Glen Elementary. These schools are in low-income neighborhoods with the goal of providing all the services a child needs in one setting. Components of the Enhanced Option program include smaller class sizes, a home-school coordinator, an optional extended school year, a Reading Recovery program, the Encore program for accelerated learners, Families and Schools Together (FAST), and collaboration with area service providers to make medical and mental health services available at the school.¹⁴

Metro has five alternative learning centers (ALC). Four free-standing schools, Johnson, Cohn, Murphy, and Jere Baxter, and one center within Maplewood High School, serve students in grades K-12 who are removed from their home schools for disciplinary reasons. The district has room in its ALCs for 260 students at any one time. In 2000-01, 325 students were expelled from Metro's schools. The district has an ALC consultant that evaluates each student expelled for a zero-tolerance violation and places the student in the appropriate ALC.¹⁵

Schools in Nashville have "PENCIL partners," local businesses that sponsor the schools, providing materials and supplies as well as volunteer support. PENCIL Foundation is a nonprofit organization in Nashville founded in 1982 "to create and cultivate education partnerships that enhance learning, promote career success, and improve quality of life in our community."¹⁶

¹⁴ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools website, <http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/Schools/magnets.html>, accessed May 3, 2002, and interview with Dr. Dorothy Gunn, Principal, Napier Enhanced Option Elementary School, June 20, 2001.

¹⁵ Phone interview with Connie Moore, Student Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools, June 10, 2002.

¹⁶ PENCIL Foundation, <http://www.pencilfoundation.org/AboutPENCIL/AboutPENCIL.htm> (accessed May 30, 2002).

Schools on Notice Background Characteristics

East Middle School 2000-01	
Grades served	7-8
Number of students	513
African American	71%
Caucasian	26.9%
Other	2%
English language learners*	2.3%
Special education	21.8%
Free and reduced price lunch	87.2%
Number of teachers employed	35
Number of administrators	1

*(Source: East Middle School Report Card 2001; *Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form; Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

East Middle School will close at the end of the 2001-02 school year, and students previously zoned for East will go to Bailey Middle School. Previously, students came to East from Ross and Lockland Elementary Schools and went on to Stratford High School. The student mobility rate at East Middle was 73 percent in 1999-2000 and 72 percent in 2000-01.¹⁷

The principal at East has been in the position for three years, and this is his first job as head principal. The principal indicated that teacher turnover is a problem, and he has trouble finding teachers, particularly experienced teachers, that fit his vision and are willing to teach in the inner city. The school's location beside a magnet school has hurt the school's attempt to raise students' self-image and esteem. However, according to the principal, the staff currently teaching at East is very dedicated to and optimistic about the chances of success in working with these students.¹⁸

East has had trouble with trespassers. The presence of a full-time School Resource Officer (SRO) has helped curb this problem. Truancy has also been a concern, but a juvenile court and full-time probation officer at the school improved attendance in the last two years. East Middle uses in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and alternative school placement for students with disciplinary problems.¹⁹

The building that houses East Middle is 64 years old and has 32 classrooms. Another eight classrooms are in portables. The building is in poor condition and will be closed for "modernization" at the end of the 2001-02 school year. Space is available for non-

¹⁷ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form East Middle School (7-8), http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/general_info_folder/acctframework/SupplementalInformation/EastM.pdf (accessed May 15, 2002).

¹⁸ Telephone interview with Ervin Tinnon, Principal, East Middle School, May 2, 2002.

¹⁹ Ibid.

academic classes and extra-curricular activities.²⁰ The principal reported that the district is slow to respond to maintenance needs.²¹

East received \$250,260 in Title I funds in 2000-01.²² In each classroom, students and teachers have access to new computers purchased with Title I funds. Title I money is also used for after-school tutoring and remediation for students that come to East without the necessary skills for grade-level instruction. The school also received a grant for a computer lab from Josten's and a music grant. Mrs. Winners, a fast food chain, is the school's PENCIL partner.²³

According to the principal, parental involvement and community support are hard to attract in an inner-city setting. However, several area agencies work with the students (and their families) at East, including: the Martha O'Bryan Center, a Family Resource Center, the East Nashville Health Clinic, and the Dede Wallace Center, a mental health service agency.²⁴

Kirkpatrick Elementary School 2000-01	
Grades served	K-4
Number of students	401
African American	76.9%
Caucasian	18.1%
Other	5.1%
English language learners*	6.9%
Special education	20.1%
Free and reduced price lunch	98.9%
Number of teachers employed	39
Number of administrators	1

*(Source: Kirkpatrick Elementary School Report Card 2001; * Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form; Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

Kirkpatrick is a part of the Stratford High School cluster. Students go to Dalewood Middle School upon completion of the 4th grade at Kirkpatrick. Only about 30 percent of the students entering Kirkpatrick have attended any type of preschool.²⁵ The student mobility rate was 44 percent in 1999-2000 and 46 percent in 2000-01.²⁶

²⁰ Metro Nashville Public Schools, "Five Year Capital Plan Analysis (PE Rooms Included)," April 28, 1998; telephone interview with Ervin Tinnon, Principal, East Middle School, May 2, 2002.

²¹ Telephone interview with Ervin Tinnon, Principal, East Middle School, May 2, 2002.

²² Lynn Elam, Department of Federal and Categorical Grants, Metro Nashville Public Schools, "RE: Metro Nashville Schools Grants," E-mailed to Author, May 9 and 10, 2002.

²³ Telephone interview with Ervin Tinnon, East Middle School, May 2, 2002.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Interview with Georganne Oxnam, Principal, Kirkpatrick Middle School, on March 26, 2002.

²⁶ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form Kirkpatrick Elementary (K-4), http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/general_info_folder/acctframework/SupplementalInformation/KirkpatrickE.pdf (accessed May 15, 2002).

Before his retirement on March 22, 2002, Kirkpatrick's principal had been in the position for four years. Upon his departure, the school's Exemplary Educator, who is a retired principal, became interim principal for the remainder of the 2001-02 school year.

Truancy is a significant problem at Kirkpatrick, and a truancy reduction team, including representatives from juvenile court, Metro Social Services, and the Martha O'Bryan center, in the school addresses it. There is a permanent substitute teacher in the school that handles in-school suspension, which is used for most disciplinary problems. No problems have warranted out-of-school suspension or expulsion this year.²⁷

One component of Kirkpatrick's new School Improvement Plan was to change the building access policies. Parents now sign in and out of the building and the side doors are locked during the school day. There are no cameras on the property and the school does not have an SRO. However, safety has not been a significant problem at Kirkpatrick.²⁸

The facility that houses Kirkpatrick is 50 years old and has 26 classrooms. The overall facility rating was "good" on TACIR's 2001 Existing School Facility Survey Form.²⁹ However, school administrators indicate that some maintenance issues have not been addressed: three significant leaks in the roof and sewer problems in the kitchen that cause an unpleasant odor and unsanitary conditions at times. There are also some problems in the student restrooms, and one of the fire doors does not function properly. The principal does not feel maintenance staff is adequate.³⁰

Adequate classroom space is available for academic classes, and nine portables house a Reading Recovery teacher, family and home-school coordinator, special education, speech pathology, and a parent center. However, the school does not have an art room, gymnasium, or activity room, and the school playground is unusable because of broken glass and needles that reappear despite a fence and cleaning efforts. The school has not sought law enforcement assistance with this problem.³¹

In 2000-01, Kirkpatrick received \$304,437 in Title I funds and a \$49,300 Goals 2000 grant.³² Title I money pays a full-time family-school coordinator and Reading Recovery teacher. Teachers have attended training on teaching children who live in poverty, which was funded by Title I. Kirkpatrick is also a state preschool pilot site, and these state grant funds provide pre-K services for 18 four-year-olds and pay a full-time home-school coordinator. Metro Schools' district staff helped school staff complete an application for

²⁷ Interview with Georganne Oxnam, Principal, Kirkpatrick Middle School, March 26, 2002.

²⁸ Ibid..

²⁹ Tennessee Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form for Kirkpatrick Elementary School, 2001.

³⁰ Interview with Georganne Oxnam, Principal, Kirkpatrick Middle School, March 26, 2002.

³¹ Ibid.; telephone interview with Dana Fowler, Family Coordinator, Kirkpatrick Elementary School, July 15, 2002.

³² Lynn Elam, Department of Federal and Categorical Grants, Metro Nashville Public Schools, RE: Metro Nashville Schools Grants, E-mailed to Author, May 9 & 10, 2002.

a federal Comprehensive School Reform Design (CSRD) grant. Ingram Books and Allstate Insurance are the school's PENCIL partners.³³

Maplewood High School 2000-01	
Grades served	9-12
Number of students	1042
African American	74.9%
Caucasian	20.2%
Other	4.8%
English language learners*	2.5%
Special education	0
Free and reduced price lunch	57.5%
Number of teachers employed	71
Number of administrators	4

*(Source: Maplewood High School Report Card 2001; *Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

The Maplewood cluster includes Hattie Cotton, Tom Joy, Caldwell, and Shwab Elementary Schools; Jere Baxter and Gra-Mar Middle Schools; and Jere Baxter Alternative School. Shwab Elementary is also on notice. The principal reported that student mobility was high in 2000-01.

Maplewood has one full-time and one part-time SRO and security cameras throughout the building. Attendance is a major problem at Maplewood, but the school raised attendance rates with a parent call program and the use of the juvenile court. Administrators feel that the rise in out-of-school suspensions because of lack of alternatives has exacerbated low performance.³⁴

The facility that houses Maplewood High School is 45 years old and has 54 classrooms. The available classroom space is adequate; recent rezoning moved many students to Stratford and Hunters Lane High Schools. The athletic trainer uses the only portable on the campus. Maplewood has ample space and facilities for non-academic classes and extra-curricular activities. Technology is sorely lacking, and the school is limited to 20 computers in the vocational education classrooms and 10 in the library. Students only have access to the Internet on six computers in the library, and no printers are available for student use.³⁵

In 2000-01, Maplewood received \$82,634 in 21st Century Community Learning grant funds, \$34,400 for an ROTC program, and \$113,564 for the Family Resource Center. Other grants included \$5,000 from High Schools that Work and a \$2,000 Tech Prep grant from NSTI. Currently, Maplewood receives grant funding for the Club MCM after-

³³ Interview with Brenda King, Principal, Pearl-Cohn High School, March 6, 2002.

³⁴ Interview with James Sawyers, Principal, Maplewood High School, on March 26, 2002.

³⁵ Ibid.

school program, which provides enrichment programs and tutoring for tests, and for the Saturday Academy that includes Gateway and ACT test preparation.

Many community agencies are active at the school. United Way provides a child care program for teen parents attending Maplewood, and the Alcohol and Drug Council's Youth Alive and Free program focuses on reducing substance abuse. Other community groups involved with the students include the YMCA, Boy Scouts of America, Healthy Start, Taking Charge, and United Neighborhood Health Services.³⁶

Pearl-Cohn High School 2000-01	
Grades served	9-12
Number of students	988
African American	77.5%
Caucasian	19.9%
Other	2.6%
English language learners*	3.6%
Special education	0
Free and reduced price lunch	53.8%
Number of teachers employed	66
Number of administrators	3

*(Source: Pearl-Cohn High School Report Card 2001; *Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

The Pearl-Cohn cluster includes Cockrill and Park Avenue Enhanced Option Elementary Schools, Bass, McKissick, and Head Magnet Middle Schools; and Martin Luther King Magnet High School. None of the other schools in the cluster is on notice. The principal regards student mobility as low and not a contributor to low performance.³⁷ This is the principal's first year as a head principal. Before coming to Pearl-Cohn, she was an assistant principal at Hillsboro High School.

The school has a full-time SRO and has visible police presence on the grounds during student arrival and dismissal times. Discipline problems are handled through in-school suspensions and district alternative programs. The principal reports a 16 percent drop in out-of school suspensions compared to the last three years, and expulsions have been limited to zero-tolerance offenses.³⁸

The facility that houses Pearl-Cohn High School is only 15 years old and has 81 classrooms. No portables are needed as the school has ample space for academic as well as non-academic classes and extra-curricular activities. However, in 2000-01, 10 classes at Pearl-Cohn exceeded the maximum class size of 35 for grades 7-12. Class size

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Interview with Brenda King, Principal, Pearl-Cohn High School, March 6, 2002.

³⁸ Ibid.

mandates were met for the 2001-02 school year.³⁹ Technology is very limited. Only some classrooms have working computers, and very few are new enough to be compatible with contemporary software or the Internet. According to the principal, competition for use of computers causes friction among teachers.⁴⁰

Pearl-Cohn is also the home of Metro’s Business Magnet program, which provides a full range of business courses, designed to prepare students for entering a university or starting a career. The integrated curriculum includes career clusters in business and mass communication, and business finance. In the first year, all students in the program take Career Preparation, which includes basic classes like Keyboarding and Strategies for Success. Concentrated areas of study in later years include information processing and systems, communications, finance, television production, and entrepreneurship. As a member of the National Academy Foundation, the Business Magnet is the only Metro school that offers the Academy of Finance, which provides several school-to-career opportunities to each academy student.⁴¹

In 2000-01, Pearl-Cohn received several grants including \$138,322 for Safe Schools, \$82,633.93 for 21st Century Community Learning, and a \$5,000 High Schools That Work grant. Pearl-Cohn has a Family Resource Center, Project GRAD, and Club ACM grants to run these specific programs. Also, the school has a small grant for an abstinence program, and one teacher has a small technology grant.⁴²

Shwab Elementary School 2000-01	
Grades served	K-6
Number of students	510
African American	62.1%
Caucasian	32.1%
Other	5.8%
English language learners*	8.4%
Special education	19.1%
Free and reduced price lunch	95.2%
Number of teachers employed	41
Number of administrators	1

*(Source: Schwab Elementary School Report Card 2001; *Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form; Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

Shwab is a part of the Maplewood High School cluster. As of 2001-02, students attending Schwab go to Jere Baxter Middle School upon completion of the 4th grade. Previously,

³⁹ Data are from the Department of Education. The 2001-02 school year was the first year the Department of Education required schools to comply with class size mandates.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Pearl-Cohn/Business Magnet Comprehensive High School Profile, Metro Nashville Public Schools Website, www.mnps.org, accessed May 30, 2002.

⁴² Interview with Brenda King, Principal, Pearl-Cohn High School, March 6, 2002.

Shwab served grades K-6; now it is a K-4 school. Student mobility is high: 65 percent in 1999-2000 and 55 percent in 2000-01.⁴³ Many students live in trailer parks or motels, and many families live “check to check.”⁴⁴

Shwab’s principal has been at the school for three years. When interviewed, she indicated that she would like to have an opportunity to focus more closely on instruction. Schwab does not have an assistant principal and the principal feels that having someone in this position would lessen the demands on her to handle disciplinary issues. In the 2001-02 school year, 45 percent of the faculty was new to Schwab. The principal estimates that approximately three out of 39 teachers are absent each day, and the school often has trouble getting substitutes.⁴⁵

Shwab had some disciplinary problems when 5th and 6th graders attended the school. Since the older students left after the 2000-01 school year, many disciplinary problems vanished. For the most part, disciplinary problems are handled through in-school suspension, and expelled students are sent to alternative schools. The school does not have security cameras or an SRO, but Metro police officers patrol Dickerson Pike to keep drug dealers and prostitutes away from school grounds during arrival and dismissal times. Truancy is not a significant problem at Schwab. Prior to this year, Schwab had a full-time guidance counselor, but the school lost that position when the older grades were removed. The school social worker and psychologist come once per week.⁴⁶

The facility that houses Schwab Elementary School is 65 years old and has 16 classrooms. Health classes and the YMCA Fun Company after-school program are held in portable classrooms. Space is adequate, and facilities are *available for non-academic classes and extra-curricular activities. However, in 2000-01, Schwab had one class that exceeded the maximum class size of 30 for grades 4-6.⁴⁷ In addition to a computer lab, each classroom has at least two computers either donated or bought with Title I funds. Plans are in place for renovations tied to Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

The school’s location on Dickerson Road, in close proximity to low income and temporary housing, transient communities, as well as high crime areas, has made it difficult to engage parents. However, area businesses have provided field trip money and area clean-ups. Schwab does not have a PENCIL partner, since Shoney’s is no longer able to provide financial support to the school. The YMCA Fun Company provides before- and after-school care, and the school has a summer Starfish reading program.⁴⁸

⁴³ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form, Schwab Elementary (PK-4), http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/general_info_folder/acctframework/SupplementalInformation/ShwabE.pdf (accessed May 15, 2002).

⁴⁴ Telephone interview with Sgt. Dan Ogren, Metro Police Department, on March 25, 2002.

⁴⁵ Interview with JoAnn Brannon, Principal, Schwab Elementary School, on February 21, 2002.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Data are from the Department of Education. The 2001-02 school year was the first year the Department of Education required schools to comply with class size mandates.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Shwab received \$334,194 in Title I funds in 2000-01.⁴⁹ Title I funds pay for tutoring, a parent coordinator, reading specialist, and technical assistance for computers. For school year 2001-02, Schwab has a 21st Century School grant for computers and other equipment and another technology grant in its third year. A state Early Childhood grant provides a pre-K program for four- and five-year-olds.

Stratford Comprehensive High School 2000-01	
Grades served	9-12
Number of students	975
African American	64.6%
Caucasian	30.3%
Other	5.1%
English language learners*	3.3%
Special education	25.4%
Free and reduced price lunch	44.2%
Number of teachers employed	71
Number of administrators	4

*(Source: Stratford Comprehensive High School Report Card 2001; * Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form; Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

The Stratford cluster includes Cora Howe, Inglewood, Kirkpatrick, Dan Mills, Rosebank, Ross, and Warner Elementary Schools; and Bailey, Dalewood, East, Litton, East Literature Magnet, and Meigs Magnet Middle Schools. Kirkpatrick Elementary, Warner Elementary, and East Middle are also on notice.

The principal has served 11 years as a principal and six years as an assistant principal. She has been at Stratford for four years. The principal believes staff turnover is a problem, with 30 percent turnover last year, and she expressed difficulty finding qualified special education, ESL, and high school reading teachers.⁵⁰

Stratford has one full-time and one part-time SRO and security cameras throughout the building and grounds. The school has major disciplinary problems related to gang violence, drugs, and a night-time fight club. Students are expelled for gang related fighting and zero tolerance offences, and those students are sent to Jere Baxter, Maplewood, or Murphy Avenue alternative programs. Truancy problems are addressed through on-site attendance workers and juvenile court held at the school.⁵¹

The facility that houses Stratford High School is 39 years old and has 78 classrooms. The school is at full capacity, and hallways are congested during class changes. The athletic trainer uses the one portable classroom on campus. Long-range plans are in place to

⁴⁹ Lynn Elam, Department of Federal and Categorical Grants, Metro Nashville Public Schools, "RE: Metro Nashville Schools Grants," E-mailed to the Author, May 9 & 10, 2002.

⁵⁰ Interview with Nancy Dill, Principal, Stratford High School, on March 27, 2002.

⁵¹ Ibid.; telephone interview with Sgt. Dan Ogren, East Station, Metro Police Department, on March 25, 2002.

upgrade the bathrooms and athletic facilities; however, the principal reports that the district responds slowly to repair needs, such as a leak and inadequate climate control in classrooms.⁵²

Access to technology for both Stratford students and teachers is limited and inconsistent. Every classroom has an ISDN line and at least one computer, but only 30 percent of the classes have adequate hardware and software to access the Internet. The school is phasing in an online grading system, but varying staff skill levels have hampered the process. The PLATO Learning Lab (self-paced, computer-assisted instruction) has 24 computers, and the library has 20 more. The other three labs used for word processing are stocked with recycled hardware. The school is unable to use the STAR reading program given to it by the district because the computers cannot run the software. Most of the computers in the school are donated, and most are outdated and limited in usefulness.⁵³

The school has purchased newer hardware and software using money from the school's Baldrige grant, "High Schools That Work," and the "Schools for Thought" partnership with Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt is providing \$20,000 for hardware, software, and technology training. The Baldrige grant also includes money for classroom supplies and professional development for teachers. In addition, Stratford has an Urban Systemic Grant that pays for math and science specialists every other week. In the past two years, 12 to 15 mini-grants have been awarded to individual teachers and programs at the school for things like AP classes, vocational education, music, poetry café, and the library. The school recently applied for a CSRD grant to raise parental involvement.

Stratford has a lot of community support. American General and Monster Labs are the school's PENCIL partners, and they provide volunteers, supplies, and internships. The Chamber of Commerce and Opry Mills Retail Academy provide vocational internships, and Community Impact offers internships and scholarships to Stratford graduates. Other area businesses and agencies active with Stratford students include the YMCA, Martha O'Bryan Center, Tennessee State University, and the Tennessee Titans.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

Warner Elementary School 2000-01	
Grades served	K-4
Number of students	498
African American	81.2%
Caucasian	15.9%
Other	3%
English language learners*	6.4%
Special education	12.6%
Free and reduced price lunch	100%
Number of teachers employed	42
Number of administrators	2

*(Source: Warner Elementary School Report Card 2001; *Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form; Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

Warner is a part of the Stratford High School Cluster. Previously, after completing the 4th grade at Warner, students went to Lockland Middle School, which is now closed. As of 2001-02, students from Warner will go to Bailey Middle School.⁵⁴ According to the principal, many children attending Warner are homeless at some point during the year. Metro received \$118,000 in federal funds under the McKinney act in 2000-01 for a program to assist homeless students and those at-risk of being homeless. The HERO program provides after-school tutoring at Nashville’s shelters and in schools that homeless children attend, as well as family support services and coordination of social services.⁵⁵ Student mobility was 39 percent in 1999-2000 and 48 percent in 2000-01.⁵⁶

Tardiness is a concern at Warner, with as many as 64 students (or approximately one-eighth of the student body) tardy on a given day. The school uses a half-day in-school suspension program, called “discipline support services,” to deal with most behavioral issues. Students can be suspended from the building if the infraction is severe or repetitive, but the principal prefers to keep them in school if possible. The suspension rate was approximately 18 percent in school year 2000-01.⁵⁷

The facility that houses Warner Elementary School is 86 years old and has 29 classrooms. The building received an overall facility rating of “fair” on the TACIR Existing School Facility Survey Form and has falling plaster, chipped paint, old carpet, and broken furniture.⁵⁸ In addition, the principal reports a need for more custodial staff. Classroom space is adequate for current enrollment, and the six portables on the grounds

⁵⁴ Interview with Carlene Bowers, Principal, Warner Elementary School, on November 16, 2001.

⁵⁵ Phone Interview with Cassandra T. Biles, Coordinator of Social Workers and Attendance Services, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, June 19, 2002.

⁵⁶ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form, Warner Elementary (PK-4), http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/general_info_folder/acctframework/SupplementalInformation/WarnerE.pdf (accessed May 15, 2002).

⁵⁷ Tennessee Department of Education, Warner Elementary School Report Card 2001.

⁵⁸ Tennessee Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form for Warner Elementary School, 2001.

house non-academic classes such as music and art, as well as the YMCA Fun Company after-school program.

Warner has few technology resources. The school has about 33 computers, but many are not functional. The eight PCs and three Macintoshes in the library are idle because the school has no librarian to supervise students. Title I provided some computer hardware in previous years, which the school returned to the central office after it became obsolete.⁵⁹

Warner has two pre-K classes serving 40 students a year, but only 12 to 15 percent of students entering Warner attend any type of pre-K program. The principal believes that this contributes to the overall lack of skills kindergarteners exhibit upon entering the school. The school has before- and after-school care provided by the YMCA. Warner is not an enhanced option school, but the principal believes the enhanced option features, such as an extended school year and reduced class size, would greatly benefit the students.⁶⁰ Warner is slated to become an enhanced option school in the 2002-03 school year.⁶¹

Warner received \$360,136 in Title I funds in 2000-01.⁶² In the 2001-02 school year, \$155,000 paid for five teaching positions and a communications system. In addition, \$15,000 purchased material, books, and the Success for All (SFA) program; \$75,000 pays for three tutors; \$11,000 pays a part-time teacher and “Rap, Reading and Rhyme” reading workshops for 4th graders; \$5,200 will fund Johns Hopkins observations of SFA; and another \$34,000 will pay to sponsor teachers attending the SFA conference and for the “Building Stronger Readers” summer program. In addition to Title I funds, some teachers have received Frist Foundation grants for professional development and travel.

West End Middle School 2000-01	
Grades served	7-8
Number of students	278
African American	56.1%
Caucasian	31.4%
Other	12.5%
English language learners*	18.5%
Special education	22.8%
Free and reduced price lunch	89.4%
Number of teachers employed	28
Number of administrators	1

*(Source: West End Middle School Report Card 2001; *Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Supplemental Information Form; Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Interview with Vern Denny, Director of Student Assignment Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools, on May 8, 2002.

⁶² Lynn Elam, Department of Federal and Categorical Grants, Metro Nashville Public Schools, “RE: Metro Nashville Schools Grants,” E-mailed to the Author, May 9 & 10, 2002.

The principal of West End has been there for seven years and has recently seen major changes in the student population. In school year 2001-02, West End Middle school was rezoned and became a neighborhood school, also adding the 5th and 6th grades. Previously, students came to West End from Head and McKissick Middle Schools and went to Pearl-Cohn High School. Beginning in 2000-01, West End is in the Hillsboro cluster, and students feed into West End from Sylvan Park and Eakin elementary schools. Those students are from higher-income families than students attending the school prior to 2000. The principal indicates that only about 50 students that attended West End in 2000-01 returned this year.⁶³ The school had a mobility rate of 63 percent in 1999-2000 and 69 percent in 2000-01.

West End has security cameras throughout the three-story building and a full-time SRO on the premises. It has very few security problems, and truancy is not a problem. The school uses in-school suspension to handle most behavior problems, but the principal refers students to Metro Schools' alternative schools for serious infractions.⁶⁴

The West End Middle School building is 62 years old and has 29 classrooms. The overall facility rating on the TACIR Existing School Facility Survey Form was "fair". In addition, the data indicated that the building did not have enough classroom space to accommodate the teacher-pupil ratio required by the Education Improvement Act. Four portables are in poor condition but still used for music and Spanish classes. Space and facilities are available for extra-curricular activities such as sports and arts. The building is large, and the custodial staff is not adequate, according to the principal. West End's facility is not handicap-accessible, but plans for \$175,200 in renovations are in place to remedy that situation.⁶⁵

West End is in the final year of a three-year \$255,000 CSRD grant. The money purchased computers, video conferencing, Smart Boards, and staff development. In addition, in 2000-01, West End received a 21st Century Community Learning grant of \$101,973.⁶⁶ The school also has a \$90,000 Microsoft grant in conjunction with Tennessee State University that pays for technology and teacher development. The school has lost some resources in school year 2001-02 after losing its Title I status, the result of rezoning and shifting demographics.⁶⁷

⁶³ Interview with James Murrell, Principal, West End Middle School, February 12, 2002.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Existing School Facility Survey Form and Verification Data for West End Middle School, 2001; Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, *Physical Facilities Survey and Evaluation*, January 1999.

⁶⁶ Lynn Elam, Department of Federal and Categorical Grants, Metro Nashville Public Schools, "RE: Metro Nashville Schools Grants," E-mailed to the Author, May 9 & 10, 2002.

⁶⁷ Interview with James Murrell, Principal, West End Middle School, February 12, 2002.

Whites Creek Comprehensive High School 2000-01	
Grades served	9-12
Number of students	1178
African American	80.2%
Caucasian	18.9%
Other	.9%
English language learners*	0
Special education	0
Free and reduced price lunch	39.3%
Number of teachers employed	80
Number of administrators	2

*(Source: Whites Creek Comprehensive High School Report Card 2001; *Tennessee DOE School Approval Database)*

The Whites Creek cluster includes Bordeaux Enhanced Option, Cumberland, Alex Green, and Joelton Elementary Schools; Ewing Park, Haynes, and Joelton Middle Schools; and the King's Lane Design Center and the Nashville School of the Arts. Whites Creek is the only school on notice in the cluster. Students are bused to the school from up to 18 miles away.

The principal has been in his position for 11 years. Teacher turnover is generally low. The principal expressed a need for a certified reading specialist to work with 9th graders and special education students.⁶⁸

Whites Creek has security cameras throughout the school and a full-time SRO. According to the principal, truancy and drop-out rates are high. The principal primarily attributes the drop-out rate to students being so far behind academically when they enter high school. Nearly one third of ninth graders were held back in 2000-01. Juvenile court meets at the school twice a year to address truancy, and parents are often fined. The school guidance counselor works closely with juvenile court to combat truancy. Whites Creek has a teacher that supervises in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension is used when necessary. Expelled students are remanded to one of Metro Schools' alternative schools.⁶⁹

The facility that houses Whites Creek is 23 years old and has 74 classrooms. The campus is large and the building appears to be in good shape. The space is adequate for enrollment, and facilities are available for non-academic classes and extra-curricular activities. However, in 2000-01, vocational classes averaged 21 students. The maximum class size set by the EIA for vocational classes is 20 students.⁷⁰ The principal indicated that the district office has been slow to respond to repair and construction requests, and

⁶⁸ Interview with Bruce Bowers, Principal, Whites Creek Comprehensive High School, on March 6, 2002.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Data are from the Department of Education. The 2001-02 school year was the first year the Department of Education required schools to comply with class size mandates.

the supervisory responsibility of the principal over the large custodial staff is burdensome.⁷¹

The school has a PLATO Learning Lab. Twelve computers in the library have Internet access, and each classroom has six to eight computers and Internet access. However, all of these computers have been donated or purchased with grant funds. According to the principal, many are outdated and are often incompatible with instructional software.

A federal Schools for Thought grant paid for 12 computers with Internet access, the PLATO Learning Lab, and some software for student use. The school also has a \$30,000 Vocational Education grant for communication equipment and instructional materials. Recently, Whites Creek received a Middle Tennessee Consortium grant it will use for a summer reading and math program for incoming 9th graders. The school lost some resources from the district this year because of rezoning and a subsequent drop in enrollment.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Analysis and Conclusions

Note that the symbol ★ denotes an area for which a corresponding conclusion and recommendation appear in the state-level report.

When they were placed on notice, the nine Metro schools on notice shared a common set of student characteristics that have been shown to hinder students' ability to succeed:

- students come from low-income families;
- high student mobility;
- low parent involvement; and
- students lack early childhood education.

Economic deprivation is generally recognized as one of the principal sources of sociocultural and developmental risk for children.⁷² High student mobility is associated with achievement and poverty rates. In general, highly mobile students are poorer than their non-mobile counterparts.⁷³ High mobility is shown to lower achievement for individual students, but may also have a general effect of lowering school- and district-wide performance.⁷⁴ Parental involvement in student learning is positively linked to achievement.⁷⁵ Several studies indicate that pre-kindergarten programs have a significant positive effect on children's future school performance and other life experiences, particularly those children who are at risk of failure because of poverty.⁷⁶

Metro's staffing formula provides positions for grades 5-12 to reduce class size below state mandated levels.⁷⁷ The district's staffing formula provides for 20.8:1 ratio in grades 5-12, as compared to the state-mandated average ratios of 25:1 in grades 5-6 and 30:1 in grades 7-12. (Because of additional adjustments for duty-free lunch and other mitigating factors, the BEP actually funds ratios of 25:1 in grades 7-9 and 22.08:1 in grades 10-12.) Recent information from the Department of Education shows that all Metro schools meet statutory class size standards.⁷⁸ Tennessee's Project Star and

⁷² James Garbarino, *Children and Family in the Social Environment*, Second Edition, (New York, NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1992) pp. 19-21.

⁷³ General Accounting Office, "Elementary School Children: Many Change Schools Frequently, Harming Their Education," HEHS-94-95, February 4, 1994, <http://www.gao.gov> (accessed March 12, 2002).

⁷⁴ David Kerbow, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, "Patterns of Urban Student Mobility and Local School Reform," October 1996, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report05entire.html> (accessed March 14, 2002).

⁷⁵ Gary Hoachlander, Martha Alt, and Renee Beltranena, Southern Regional Education Board, *Leading School Improvement: What Research Says: A Review of the Literature*, March 2001, p. 34, http://www.sreb.org/main/Leadership/pubs/LeadingSchool_Improvement.pdf (accessed May 1, 2002).

⁷⁶ Ethel Detch and Lynisse Roehrich-Patrick, *Why pre-k?*, A Legislative Staff Briefing Paper, the Office of Education Accountability and the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, March 2001, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, "MNPS Staffing Formulas for Grades 5-12 As Compared to Other Systems," http://www.nashville.k12.tn.us/general_info_folder/mnps_staffing_formulas.htm (accessed May 30, 2002).

⁷⁸ Tennessee Department of Education, School Approval Division, Class size spreadsheet, 2000-01.

Wisconsin's SAGE project both revealed significant positive benefits of class size reduction.⁷⁹

The Metro schools on notice have relatively high proportions of at-risk students, but schools receive few additional state and local resources to serve at-risk students. All but one of the nine schools exceeded 50 percent free and reduced price lunch. In 2000-02, all Metro elementary and middle schools on notice received federal Title I funds. As of fall 2001, West End Middle no longer qualified for Title I funds because of rezoning and changing student demographics. The Metro school system does not allocate Title I funds to high schools. Neither the Stratford nor Maplewood cluster has an enhanced option school, yet six of the nine schools on notice are in those two clusters. Other than Title I funds and state-mandated fee waiver funds, services for at-risk populations are limited to those provided by private (primarily nonprofit) organizations. At least two principals interviewed commented on the lack of resources available to serve at-risk populations. The MGT of America audit of Metro schools recommended the district hire an additional 55 social service personnel.⁸⁰ A recent RAND analysis of the link between NAEP⁸¹ test scores and resources emphasizes the effectiveness of policies targeting students of low socioeconomic status.⁸²

★ Principals indicate that many students in the Metro schools on notice are unprepared for grade-level skills acquisition when they enter each level of education (elementary, middle, high). The following concerns were voiced by multiple principals and other staff during interviews conducted by comptroller staff.

- Kindergarten students enter without pre-kindergarten backgrounds and foundation skills in language, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- Many students remain in middle schools until they are 16, and then they are passed to high school despite a failure to acquire the basic skills needed for high school.
- In many cases, incoming 9th graders read at between 4th and 7th grade levels.
- Little remediation is available for students performing below grade level due to limited resources, core curriculum requirements, and specialized teachers.
- While summer school is offered at 16 elementary, eight middle, and four high schools for all K-8 curriculum and core high school classes, attendance is voluntary and access is limited because transportation is not provided, and there is a fee after the 4th grade.⁸³

Most Metro schools on notice have insufficient and outdated technology and report little technology support from the central office; however, Metro schools recently

⁷⁹ In addition to the articles listed above, see Ivor Pritchard, "Reducing Class Size: What Do We Know?," National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, March 1999.

⁸⁰ MGT of America, *Long-Range Implementation Plan Resulting from a Performance Audit of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools: Final Report*, January 2001.

⁸¹ NAEP is the National Assessment of Education Progress.

⁸² David Grissmer, Ann Flanagan, Jennifer Kawata, and Stephanie Williamson, *Improving Student Achievement: What NAEP Test Scores Tell Us*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), pp. 100-101.

⁸³ Phone interview with Emily Stinson, Elementary Specialist, Metro Nashville Public Schools, May 14, 2002.

hired a Chief Technology Officer to develop and implement a district-wide strategic technology plan. A recent survey of Metro’s school-level technology found that 22 percent of the computers are too old to run modern software.⁸⁴ Several schools are not able to take advantage of Internet access in the classroom because of old hardware. With Metro paying for only six percent of hardware system wide, the result is a patchwork of donated and grant-funded materials and “have” and “have-not” schools when it comes to technology.⁸⁵ A 1999 SREB report recommends that classrooms have late-model networked computers for student use, and a suitable ratio of computers to students. The report recommends a minimum of one computer to every five students. In addition, the same SREB publication states that “successful educational computing and networking relies on the availability of training and technical support.”⁸⁶ According to school administrators, Metro schools receive no technical assistance from the district, and this results in an inconsistent and unreliable instructional technology among schools and classrooms.

In 2000 and 2001 the Metro Council appropriated a total of \$20 million—\$3 million in fund balances and \$17 million in general obligation bond proceeds—to Metro schools for technology.⁸⁷ The Chief Technology Officer, hired in November 2001, is developing a strategic action plan to allocate half of that appropriation among the schools. The allocation will be based on information gathered from interviews, teacher surveys, and data analysis. Based on the results of the recent technology survey performed by the district, plans are in place to increase technical support to schools by the fall.

- A new help desk with five technicians will provide computer support to school staff over the phone.
- Ten technicians will roam the district to install and repair computers.
- Each of the 11 high school clusters will have a full-time technology teacher to help teachers in all of the cluster’s schools use computers effectively for classroom instruction.
- A driver will go to schools and pick up broken equipment, eliminating the need for teachers to deliver unusable hardware to the central office.⁸⁸

There is a shortage of qualified substitutes in Metro schools. Principals in many schools on notice commented on the lack of availability of substitute teachers. The MGT of America audit of Metro schools found that 12 percent of teacher absences are unfilled by substitutes.⁸⁹ When interviewed, school administrators at all levels complained about the poor quality of the substitutes provided by the district. Central office staff agreed that

⁸⁴ Diane Long, “Survey Identifies Metro’s Tech Needs,” *The Tennessean*, June 9, 2002, Accessed online at http://tennessean.com/education/archives/02/06/18534916.shtml?Element_ID=18534916, June 10, 2002.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Lou Parker and William R. Thomas, *Guidelines for Technology Equipment Selection and Use: An SREB Model for Schools and Campuses*, (Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board, 1999) pp. 4-5.

⁸⁷ Interview with Greg McClarin, Capital Investment Coordinator, Department of Finance, on June 12, 2002; interview with Lance Lott, Chief Technology Officer, Metro Public Schools, on May 13, 2002.

⁸⁸ Diane Long, “Metro Schools Don’t Want Tech for Tech’s Sake,” *The Tennessean*, June 10, 2002, Accessed online at <http://tennessean.com/backissues/02/06/10/education/>, June 10, 2002.

⁸⁹ MGT of America, *Long-Range Implementation Plan Resulting from a Performance Audit of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools: Final Report*, January 2001, p. 7-44.

the tight labor market and high rate of teacher absences contribute to this problem. The proposed 2002-03 budget for Metro schools cuts over seven percent of the substitute teacher budget. However, Metro schools only used approximately 80 percent of the dollars budgeted for substitutes in 2001-02.⁹⁰

School administrators in the Metro schools on notice report that the ELL student population is growing, yet there is limited availability of quality ELL teachers.

Several schools on notice have only part time ELL teachers, and at least one has no teacher, so students are sent to other schools. Two-thirds of principals interviewed report that they have had trouble meeting the growing need for ELL instruction. In 2000-01, there were 4,013 ELL students in all of Metro's schools and 261 in the nine on-notice schools. The 2001-02 budget funded 111.8 ELL teacher positions, and the 2002-03 proposed budget (approved by the Metro Board of Public Education in April 2002) more than doubles the number of ELL teacher positions.

School administrators in the Metro high schools on notice report a particular need for reading specialists in higher grades. During site visits to high schools on notice, three of four principals expressed a need for reading specialists. Many students entering 9th grade read at a 4th to 7th grade level according to in-class reading assessments. Principals suggested that the focused use of Reading Recovery in lower grades has left them with few resources to offer remedial reading help in high schools.⁹¹ Research shows (and school system staff agree) that the lack of coordinated reading curricula across grades can contribute to low student achievement.⁹²

The proposed 2002-03 budget for Metro schools contains 69 new reading specialist positions for the elementary grades. However, in contrast to the statements by principals of high schools on notice, the proposed budget does not provide for high school reading specialists.⁹³

School administrators report that the central office is slow to respond to maintenance requests, and central office personnel indicate that they struggle to allocate limited resources effectively across a large service area. During site visits, principals at six of nine on-notice schools listed needed repairs and, in many cases, stated that the district had not addressed maintenance issues adequately or in a timely manner.⁹⁴ Central office staff admit that resources are spread too thin to provide preventive maintenance and that increased staffing would improve service. The year-round staff of 145 maintenance workers serve 130 schools and receive approximately 200 work requests a day. An assistant maintenance supervisor indicates the need for a 30 percent

⁹⁰ Metropolitan Board of Public Education, *SY 2002-2003 Proposed Student-Based Budget*, May 7, 2002, p. 8.

⁹¹ Interviews with principals at Pearl-Cohn, Stratford and Whites Creek High Schools in March 2002.

⁹² Implementing Schoolwide Programs – An Idea Book on Planning, “Section III Planning Schoolwide Program Change, Step 3: Clarifying Needs and Finding Research-based Strategies,” U.S. Department of Education, October 1998, http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/section_3.html (accessed May 15, 2002).

⁹³ Metropolitan Board of Public Education, *SY 2002-2003 Proposed Student-Based Budget*, May 7, 2002, p. 6.

⁹⁴ OREA staff site visits to schools on notice, March 2002.

increase in maintenance staff. Calls are prioritized based on urgency, which contributes to the perception that the system is unresponsive to some requests. In spring 2001, building engineers were hired and placed in each of the district's high schools to handle small repairs and communicate other needs to district maintenance staff.⁹⁵ The 2002-03 budget adds 13 maintenance positions (\$317,000) and cuts \$265,000 of the maintenance budget originally allocated, but never used, for a second maintenance shift.

Recent zoning changes and choice options instituted as part of the School Improvement Plan are temporarily disruptive to some on-notice schools; these changes also complicate longitudinal comparisons of school data. "Neighborhood schools" may be beneficial to both students and administrators. However, the shift from desegregation measures (i.e., busing) and to a consistent three-tiered grade structure required staffing, programmatic, and governance adjustments. Principals perceive some negative impacts on their schools, including jumps in teacher turnover from grade composition changes and drops in student morale in response to location of a low-performing school adjacent to a magnet. Moreover, because the composition of some on-notice schools changed significantly in the last year or will change in the coming year, the data available for the Office of Education Accountability study of on-notice Metro schools may only describe the past situation.

Except for a system-wide focus on low performance, the system does not appear to see on-notice schools as a priority. Although performance is a system-wide goal, the system has not focused on the on-notice schools in particular. These schools report that they have not received any special resources or support from the central office. Central office staff contend that a broader set of schools require assistance, and the district's strategy is to initiate reforms designed to raise achievement across the board.

The Metro Nashville Public Schools proposed 2002-03 budget contains improvements to address some needs of at-risk populations. The proposal includes 69 new reading specialists, 122 ESL teachers, incentives for teachers to work in low performing schools, and other interventions and services targeting students in low-performing schools.

★ **The State Department of Education's regional office serving Metro schools has not played a role in helping the on-notice schools, and state support for the on-notice schools has been limited to the Exemplary Educators.** Principals reported no contact with regional office staff, and the regional office maintained no information on the schools other than copies of their school improvement plans. Principals in eight of the nine Metro schools on notice expressed satisfaction with the Exemplary Educators.

⁹⁵ Telephone interview with Joe Caldwell, Assistant Maintenance Supervisor, Metro Nashville Public Schools, June 13, 2002.

Recommendations

Note that any conclusions in the previous section that are preceded by this symbol ★ have a related recommendation in the state-level report.

★ **To increase the preparedness of middle and high school students, Metro schools should provide more early childhood, enrichment, and remedial programs.** Nearly every principal the Office of Education Accountability interviewed commented on the lack of preparedness of students. Principals' suggestions for better preparation included pre-kindergarten, tutoring, summer school, and reading specialists, and many expressed a need for greater remediation opportunities. Studies have found that when at-risk children attend high-quality preschool programs, fewer are placed in special education in later grades, fewer are retained to repeat a grade, and more graduate from high school. Preschool programs also have been found to contribute to lower juvenile delinquency rates.⁹⁶ In addition, a RAND study identified pre-kindergarten programs as a significant factor in those states that have shown the greatest academic gains in the last decade.⁹⁷

Reaching academically at-risk students with tutoring and summer remediation programs may require the district to provide transportation and fee waivers. Principals and central office staff pointed out that often the student most in need of remediation did not have transportation or the resources to attend after-school or summer programs. High school administrators indicate that reading specialists are needed for incoming 9th graders to provide remedial reading instruction.

Metro schools should expand the enhanced option and cluster design school programs to more schools and to all high-risk clusters. No enhanced option schools or design schools are located in clusters with on-notice schools. Some of the highest risk students in Metro do not have access to enhanced option schools, which provide lower class sizes, a home-school coordinator, an optional extended school year, and other services. The Stratford and Maplewood clusters appear to have particular needs in this regard.

The state and the Metro school system should increase social services in schools serving at-risk populations. The Metro schools on notice share a set of common student characteristics, all of which are home and community risk factors. These factors impact student achievement, but they are outside the instructional responsibilities of school staff. All schools on notice invest resources in social services to prepare students to learn, and all appear to need additional services. These services may include social workers, psychologists, counselors, family resource centers, childcare, or other programs targeting problems specific to the school or the community in which it resides.

⁹⁶ *Why pre-k?*, A Legislative Staff Briefing Paper, the Office of Education Accountability, Comptroller of the Treasury and the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, March 2001, p. 2.

⁹⁷ David W. Grissmer, et al., *Improving Student Achievement: What NAEP State Test Scores Tell Us*, RAND Corporation, July 25, 2000, p. xxvi.

Appendix A

Individuals Interviewed and Documents Reviewed

Individuals

Bob Bohnenstiel, Business Services Director, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Bruce Bowers, Principal, Whites Creek High School
Carlene Bowers, Principal, Warner Elementary School
JoAnn Brannon, Principal, Shwab Elementary School
Joe Caldwell, Assistant Maintenance Supervisor, Metro Nashville Public Schools
John Custer, Statistical Research Scientist, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Vern Denny, Director of Student Assignment Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Nancy Dill, Principal, Stratford High School
Lynne Elam, Grants Fiscal Coordinator, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Dana Fowler, Family Coordinator, Kirkpatrick Elementary School
Dr. Pedro Garcia, Director of Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Mary Ann Gemmill, Director of Federal & Categorical Programs, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Debbie Gould, Nashville Public Education Foundation
Ginger Hausser, District 18 Representative, Metropolitan Council
Wanda Holman, Federal/Special Programs Coordinator, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Dr. Sandra Johnson, Chief Instructional Officer, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Brenda King, Principal, Pearl-Cohn High School
Lance Lott, Chief Technology Officer, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Greg McClarin, Capital Investments Coordinator, Department of Finance, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County
Pat McNeal, Substitute Teachers Coordinator, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Connie Moore, Student Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Jim Murrell, Principal, West End Middle School
Kathy Nevill, District 4 Representative, Metropolitan Board of Public Education
Sgt. Dan Ogren, East Station, Metropolitan Police Department
Georgeanne Oxnam, Principal (Interim), Kirkpatrick Elementary School
Brent Poulton, Staff Development Coordinator, Metro Nashville Public Schools
James Sawyers, Principal, Maplewood High School
James Bruce Stanley, District 14 Representative, Metropolitan Council
Nancy Stetten, Education Consultant, Office of Research and Information Services, Department of Education
Emily Stinson, Elementary Specialist, Metro Nashville Public Schools
James Swain, Director, Middle Tennessee Regional Office, Department of Education
Dennis Thompson, Director, K-12, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Aldorothy Wright, Assistant Superintendent, Student Services, Metro Nashville Public Schools

Documents

KPMG, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Management Letter, June 30, 2001

KPMG, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Schedules of Expenditures of Federal and State Awards and Reports as Required by the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, For the Year ended June 30, 2001

Metropolitan Board of Public Education Policy Manual

Metropolitan Board of Public Education School Activity Funds Financial Statements

Metropolitan Board of Public Education School Improvement Plan

Metropolitan Board of Public Education SY 2001-2002 Final Operating Budget

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, IT Strategic Plan Final Report

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Strategic Plan

MGT of America, Long-Range Implementation Plan Resulting From a Performance

Audit of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

School Improvement Plans for the nine on-notice schools

School and System Report Cards

Appendix B
Current Status of Schools On Notice
as reported by the Department of Education

(Note: This list includes Title I schools in School Improvement that were not on notice in 2001-02.)

Achieved good standing by showing two years of adequate progress
2000-01 and 2001-02

School system	Schools in good standing
Anderson County	Grand Oaks
Campbell County	West Lafollette
Cocke County	Grassy Fork Northwest
Cumberland County	Pine View
Fayette County	Central Elementary LaGrange Moscow
Humboldt City	East End Elementary Main Street Elementary
Henderson County	Scotts Hill School
Morgan County	Oakdale Petros Joyner
Harriman City	Central Intermediate
Memphis City	Cherokee Elementary Douglass Elementary Evans Elementary Pyramid Academy

Schools making adequate progress
2001-02

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Blount County	Eagleton Elementary
Campbell County	Stony Fork
Carter County	Range Elementary
Claiborne County	Powell Valley Elementary
Cleveland City	Arnold Elementary Blythe-Bower Elementary
Davidson County	Shwab Elementary West End Middle Pearl Cohn High School Whites Creek High School
Fayette County	Jefferson Elementary Southwest Elementary Fayette Ware High School Somerville Elementary

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Grainger County	Joppa Elementary Washburn Elementary
Grundy County	Tracy Elementary
Hamblen County	Lincoln Heights Elementary
Hamilton County	Calvin Donaldson Howard Elementary Howard School of Academics and Technology
Hawkins County	Clinch School
Kingsport City	Roosevelt Elementary
Knox County	Sarah M. Greene Elementary
Lawrence County	Ingram Sowell Elementary
Maury County	James Woody/Mt. Pleasant Elementary
Perry County	Perry County High School
Putnam County	Uffleman Elementary
Rutherford County	Holloway High School
Union County	Luttrell Elementary Maynardville Elementary
Wayne County	Frank Hughes
Memphis City	Berclair Elementary Bethel Grove Elementary Coleman Elementary Cummings Elementary Dunn Avenue Elementary Egypt Elementary Kingsbury Elementary Klondike Elementary Lauderdale Elementary Oakshire Elementary Raleigh-Bartlett Scenic Hills Brookmeade Elementary Corning Elementary Fairley Elementary Frayser Elementary Graceland Elementary Levi Elementary Lincoln Elementary Locke Elementary

School system	Schools making adequate progress
Memphis City (continued)	Orleans Elementary Raineshaven Elementary Raleigh Egypt Middle School Shannon Elementary Sharpe Elementary Sheffield Elementary Trezevant High School Whitney Elementary Melrose High School Northside High School Oakhaven High School Whitehaven High School

**Schools failing to make adequate improvement 2001-02
Recommended for probation 2002-03**

School System	Probation
Claiborne County	Clairfield Elementary
Davidson County	Kirkpatrick Elementary Warner Elementary Maplewood High School Stratford High School
Fayette County	Northwest Elementary
Hamilton County	Chattanooga Middle School Dalewood Middle School East Lake Elementary John P. Franklin Middle School Hardy Elementary Orchard Knob Elementary Orchard Knob Middle School Woodmore Elementary
Hardeman County	Grand Junction Elementary
Knox County	Maynard Elementary Lonsdale Elementary
Memphis City	Airways Middle School Carver High School Chickasaw Junior High Cypress Junior High Denver Elementary

School System	Probation
Memphis City (continued)	Dunbar Elementary Fairview Junior High Frayser High School Geeter Middle School Georgian Hills Elementary Georgian Hills Junior High Hamilton Middle School Hawkins Mill Elementary Hillcrest High School Hollywood Elementary Humes Middle School Lanier Junior High Larose Lester Elementary Longview Middle School Oakhaven High School Riverview Middle School Sheffield High School Sherwood Middle School Spring Hill Elementary Springdale Treadwell Elementary Treadwell High School Trezevant High School Vance Middle School Westhaven Elementary Westside High School Westwood Elementary Westwood High School Winchester Elementary Booker T. Washington High School East High School Fairley High School Hamilton High School Kingsbury High School Manassas High School Middle College High School Mitchell Road High School Raleigh Egypt High School South Side High School Wooddale High School

Appendix C

System Response

Each system was given an opportunity to review and respond to the report. A copy of the system's written response begins on the next page.



METROPOLITAN
Nashville
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2601 Bransford Ave. · Nashville, TN, 37204 · 615/259-8419 · Fax: 615/259-8418

Pedro E. Garcia, Ed. D.
Director of Schools

TO: Ethel R. Detch, Director
Office of Education Accountability

FROM: Pedro E. Garcia, Ed. D.
Director of Metropolitan Nashville Schools

DATE: August 8, 2002

SUBJECT: SCHOOL SYSTEM ANALYSIS REPORT

My staff and I have reviewed the Analysis and Conclusions section regarding our schools on notice. We are appreciative that the study included individuals directly involved in these schools, community demographics and probable causal factors for such low student academic performance. You have my permission to include the Metropolitan Nashville Public School System section in your final report.

Your suggestions for improvement will be discussed and utilized by individuals involved as we address the causal factors for low student achievement in our district and school strategic planning process. Thank you for supporting our school and district reform efforts.

Cc: Dr. Sandra Johnson
Dennis Thompson