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Baseline College and Career Advising

Practices in Four New Skills
Ready Nashville High Schools

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Introduction and Baseline Data

This report includes qualitative and quantitative data on the current state of college and career advising in four Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) high schools served by the New Skills Ready Project: John Overton, Maplewood, Pearl-Cohn, and Whites Creek. All four schools serve student populations that are largely students of color as shown in Table 1. While Maplewood and Overton are serving large populations of English Learner (EL) students and Hispanic students, Pearl-Cohn and Whites Creek have relatively few EL students and have student populations that are around 90% Black or African American. Overton also serves significant numbers of New Americans and students of Middle Eastern descent; these groups are not represented by name in the subgroup populations defined by the Tennessee Department of Education (used in Table 1 below).

Table 1: New Skills Ready School Populations by Subgroupⁱ

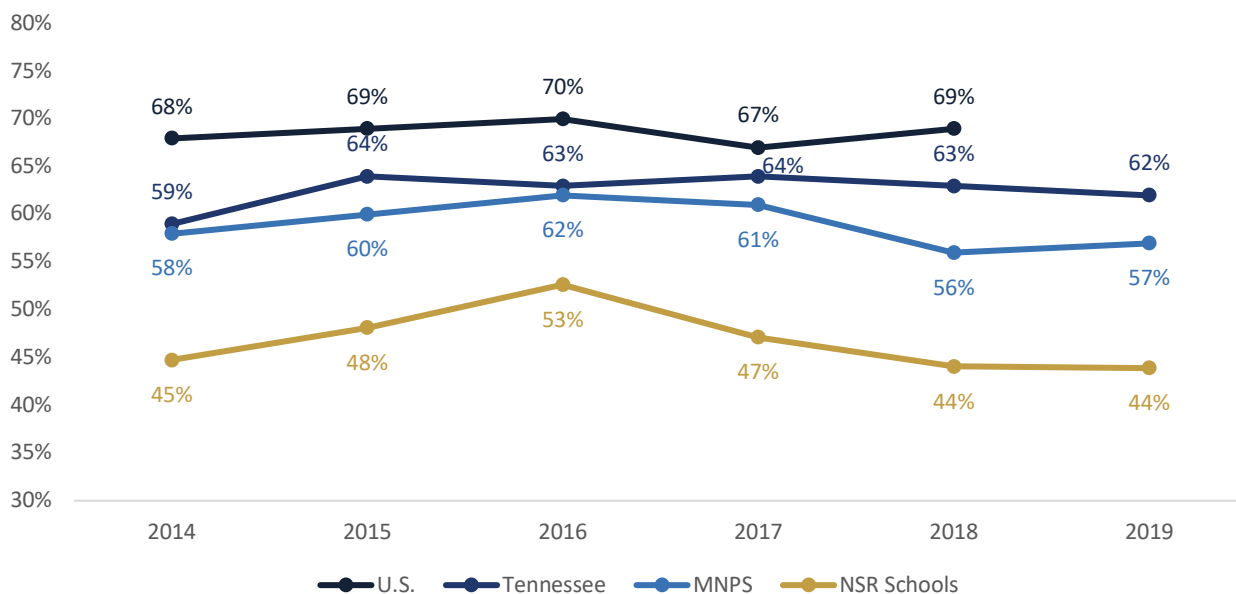
School	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	English Learners	Black, Hispanic, Native American
John Overton	33%	20%	29%	62%
Maplewood	61%	19%	20%	92%
Pearl-Cohn	70%	21%	3%	98%
Whites Creek	57%	22%	3%	88%

All four schools are serving populations that have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary access and success. These historic patterns of underrepresentation result in wide disparities in levels of educational attainment by race/ethnicity. For example, 40% of white Tennesseans ages 25-64 have a postsecondary credential, compared to 29% of Black Tennesseans and 21% of Hispanic Tennesseans.ⁱⁱ Divergences in postsecondary attainment by race/ethnicity are found in every state and illustrate well the systemic challenges the New Skills Ready project seeks to dismantle in Nashville.

The majority of students in New Skills Ready high schools do not enroll in postsecondary immediately following high school completion, as shown below in Figure 1. Although the data in Figure 1 do not include enrollment at Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), they do include other 2-year and 4-year postsecondary pathways. Historical data from the Tennessee Department of Education indicate that annually, between 1-2% of MNPS graduates enroll in TCATs immediately following high school.

The data included in Figure 1 suggest that the seamless postsecondary enrollment gains produced immediately following the introduction of Tennessee Promise in 2015 and 2016 have largely been sustained for Tennessee as a whole. Locally, both MNPS and New Skills Ready schools have seen declines in postsecondary enrollment post-2016. This variance between state and local outcomes indicate there are local challenges to postsecondary enrollment not experienced state-wide. Notably, the data in Figure 1 do not reflect the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reduced postsecondary access for historically underrepresented populations nationwide.ⁱⁱⁱ

Figure 1: Immediate Rates of Postsecondary Enrollment 2014-2019^{iv}



Past reports from the Nashville Public Education Foundation and Tennessee College Access and Success Network indicate that MNPS graduates are likely to stay in the Nashville area for postsecondary.^v Nashville has a rich array of postsecondary options from which students can select; but, as shown in Table 2, area institutions produce disparate completion outcomes for Black and Hispanic students as compared to the student population overall.

Table 2: Completion Rates Overall and for Black and Hispanic Students for Nashville-Area Institutions^{vi}

Institution		Overall Rate	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
2-Year & TCAT	Columbia State Community College	29%	27%	25%
	Motlow State Community College	36%	22%	33%
	Nashville State Community College	19%	11%	17%
	TCAT-Nashville	67%	55%	76%
	Volunteer State Community College	23%	12%	30%
4-Year	American Baptist College	33%	38%	0%
	Austin Peay State University	43%	42%	37%
	Belmont University	72%	61%	69%
	Cumberland University	43%	42%	75%
	Fisk University	50%	51%	33%
	Lipscomb University	68%	39%	68%
	Middle Tennessee State University	47%	41%	45%
	Tennessee State University	32%	30%	36%
	Trevecca Nazarene University	56%	10%	18%
	Vanderbilt University	93%	89%	92%
	Welch College	53%	17%	50%

These data indicate that among 2-year options, Columbia State is the only institution without a large completion gap between Black students and the overall student population. TCAT-Nashville demonstrates much higher overall completion rates than community college options. Among public 4-year options, Austin Peay has similar completion rates for Black students as for the overall student population; the same is true for Hispanic students at MTSU and TSU. Private colleges see wide variance in success for Black and Hispanic students, with

completion rates as low as 10% and as high as 92%. Historically Black colleges have completion rates for Black students that are similar to overall completion rates; a significant observation, as other institution types tend to have lower completion rates for Black students compared to overall completion rates.

Collectively, these baseline data indicate that:

1. NSR schools serve populations that have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary.
2. The majority of students in NSR high schools are not enrolling in postsecondary pathways and data indicate Nashville students face unique challenges compared to Tennessee high school students overall.
3. The Nashville postsecondary landscape is rich; but Black and Hispanic students experience very different outcomes depending on which postsecondary institution they attend.

Overall, there is a visible need to increase both seamless postsecondary enrollment and postsecondary completion for historically underrepresented students in Nashville. If the New Skills Ready project seeks to increase postsecondary pathway completion, both increased access and increased success will be critical components.

College and Career Advising in MNPS and New Skills Ready Schools

Successful career pathway implementation requires that students are able to access postsecondary and persist through to credential attainment. At present, most students in New Skills Ready schools are not successfully completing the transition from high school to higher education – the primary reason for this Nashville lead team’s identification of this transition as a critical focus area. Current rates of enrollment and attainment reflect systemic inequities that produce disproportionate outcomes. As the New Skills Ready Nashville project seeks to interrupt and dismantle these inequitable systems, targeted college and career advising has the potential to help address both access and completion of postsecondary. Trained college and career advisors can offer students the technical assistance they require to successfully navigate the complexities of the admissions, financial aid, and college enrollment processes. These processes include systemic barriers that contribute to the exclusion of low-income students and students of color from postsecondary. For example, legacy admissions practices, increased incidence of selection for FAFSA verification for students who are low-income compared to other FAFSA filers, and processes that require students to make housing and other deposits before financial aid comes through all create greater challenges to successful matriculation for historically underrepresented student groups. Advisors can also help students embrace postsecondary identities, identify how their strengths and interests align to postsecondary pathways, and match to postsecondary options that are a good social, academic, and financial fit – accomplishments that will position students toward successful degree or credential attainment.

Over a four-month period spanning November 2020 to February 2021, interviews were conducted with both MNPS staff and community partners to gather information on college and career advising practices, with a particular focus on the four New Skills Ready schools. Community partners also completed surveys to capture quantitative data on their college and career advising work. It is important to note that in the cases of both the MNPS and community partner experts with whom we engaged, college and career advising is just one component of their engagement with students. From working with student families and school administrators, teachers, and others on support for students with disabilities to helping students access food, transportation, and housing, advising professionals provide critical supports to Nashville’s youth. Although this report is primarily concerned with information related to college and career advising practices, the responsibilities of these professionals are complex; and what is represented here should not be considered the complete record of all facets of their work.

College and Career Advising by MNPS Professionals

Our engagement with MNPS professionals was less exhaustive than with community partners; but their perspectives served a critical role in our collection of baseline information around college and career counseling inside MNPS. Although we intentionally sought to limit what we asked for in terms of a time commitment, we encountered difficulty in coordinating conversations, particularly with school counselors, despite repeated outreach. Ultimately, interviews were held with a mix of MNPS professionals representing the roles of school counselor, Academy Coach, and GEAR UP Coordinator. These professionals perform a wide scope of duties that can understandably prohibit them from engaging with tasks outside the required demands of their day-to-day. In our conversations with these district professionals, some key themes emerged:

High caseloads and competing responsibilities constrain the ability of MNPS professionals to provide high-touch advising consistently; GEAR UP Nashville has the most bandwidth

In our conversations, MNPS professionals expressed that they deeply enjoy working with students and would like to spend more time on advising. In particular, they expressed a passion for working one-on-one with students on postsecondary planning. However, structural constraints limit their ability to do so. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends an advising caseload of no more than 250 students per counselor and that counselors spend at least 80% of their time working directly with or indirectly for students.^{vii} The school counselor ratio in MNPS is more than 350 students per counselor,^{viii} and professionals we interviewed consistently discussed challenges connected to the size of their caseload. Professionals also discussed extremely varied roles and responsibilities, from researching employment and postsecondary options for their Career Academy to standardized test preparation and administration, even registering new students for the school. They expressed frustration that they cannot spend more time forming relationships with students.

The need for additional postsecondary support has not gone unrecognized by MNPS. GEAR UP Nashville, a federal program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education, adds additional staff and resources to existing college-going services at the schools they serve. GEAR UP Nashville is currently serving three of the four New Skills Ready schools (John Overton, Maplewood, and Pearl-Cohn) while Whites Creek is served by the state grant, GEAR UP Tennessee. GEAR UP Nashville has already provided resources and services that will create a foundation for more robust postsecondary pathways, including the purchase of a social emotional learning curriculum and an intentional effort to educate students on their many postsecondary and career options.

Creating more capacity within schools for students to get college and career advising consistently should be a priority of New Skills Ready Nashville. The development of a strong partnership between NSR and GEAR UP Nashville is a logical place to start, as GEAR UP is already providing services inside NSR project schools. While there may be areas in which GEAR UP Nashville cannot assist due to the constraints of their federal funding, aligning resources where possible would provide a better overall experience for students. If efforts are well-coordinated between school counselors, Academy Coaches, and GEAR UP site coordinators, MNPS could better ensure that all students will receive advising services while also reducing redundancies in student service. Currently, there is no way to know how consistently a student is receiving advising across multiple providers— for example, a school counselor, a GEAR UP coordinator, and a community organization-based advisor. However, our qualitative research indicates that examples of redundancy are dwarfed by the number of examples in which MNPS high school students are receiving little to no advising services. Constrained advising capacity should be addressed broadly.

Access to students is a universal college and career advising barrier

We heard from community partners that consistent access to students is a challenge for them; but to our surprise, we also heard the same from MNPS professionals for whom college and career advising is a key job function. School professionals expressed that they must often work creatively to gain regular access to students during the school day, and that whether or not they can speak with students about college and career topics depends on individual teacher and principal orientation to this work. The issue of access to students is closely connected to broader structural issues related to caseloads and time spent on direct versus indirect student support, as identified in the previous section. Some of these professionals expressed envy that teachers are able to engage in conversations about college and career more regularly with students, though they all felt strongly that students benefit when they have teachers who want to engage in this topic. Some teachers are going above and beyond to incorporate aspects of postsecondary transition into their classes. In many cases, these teachers develop collaborative relationships with school counselors and seek their expert advice when needed. However, these teachers are the exception rather than the rule.

In many cases, school professionals work nimbly and creatively to build relationships with teachers and students that they can leverage to make classroom visits or pull a student aside in order to share college and career planning information. The extent to which they are able to do so depends in large part on the issues raised in the previous section, as well as the perception around whether they have an ownership role over college and career planning and pathways in their school building. Access to students is tied to how principals have either empowered them or have structured their positions. The GEAR UP Nashville team experiences related challenges around access to students; but their federal funding includes a clear mandate to engage students in postsecondary planning. GEAR UP can leverage this mandate to demand access in unique ways that others are unable to do. Even so, GEAR UP Nashville is also highly reliant on cultivated relationships with school leaders and continuously struggles to gain and maintain access to students.

Research shows that low-income and first generation college-goers are reliant on their schools for information about the postsecondary planning and enrollment process to a greater extent than other students who are better networked and resourced (e.g. Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Hill, 2008; Perna et al, 2008; Robinson & Roksa, 2016).^{ix} This body of research emphasizes the importance of relationships with counselors and other school professionals to successful postsecondary outcomes. Not just a source of information, school-based professionals serve important roles as connectors, linking students to postsecondary options and supports. Solving the access issue for both school professionals and community partners will be a critical step to the New Skills Ready project's success around postsecondary pathways.

Freshman and sophomore years of high school are under-utilized in setting students up for postsecondary success

We heard from multiple MNPS professionals that the first two years of high school are underutilized in terms of setting students up for future success in postsecondary. School professionals expressed that heavy attention is paid to successful high school graduation; therefore, they are often working most closely with students at risk of not graduating. Advising professionals are forced to make difficult decisions regarding their time, as the at-risk student population and the postsecondary bound student population require the most help around the same time in the academic calendar – but in vastly different ways. Prioritization of high school graduation also focuses the professionals' attention on students who are already juniors and seniors. School professionals described having limited touchpoints with students in the first two years of high school.

Additional structures support ninth grade students, particularly Freshman Academy. While Freshman Academy is an important opportunity to expose students to the Career Academies in their schools, multiple professionals

expressed that academic success behaviors should be a greater focus during this time. In particular, helping students to develop an academic skill foundation that would allow them to more fully benefit from Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs) available to them was cited as an area of opportunity. Students need to develop skills and habits of mind that will prepare them for academic success in general, thus ensuring they are more academically prepared for EPSOs, but also need to better understand the role of EPSOs in the postsecondary admissions and attainment context. MNPS professionals felt there were opportunities to revise the Freshman Academy model to incorporate more foundational academic and postsecondary success elements in addition to the career exposure components already in place.

Multiple professionals referred to sophomore year as the “lost year” and described a phenomenon in which students receive intensive supports in the initial transition to high school, but then almost nothing in terms of college and career support until they enter junior or senior year. Counselors noted that they may not engage with students much at all until the end of 10th grade, when they are scheduling their courses for the following year. Counselors mentioned that in many instances, students will have a track record of low grades by that point that preclude their enrollment in college-oriented EPSOs. Both MNPS and community organization advisors expressed the belief that there is a developmental turning point in 11th grade in which students become more engaged in postsecondary planning. Connecting students’ academic experiences in 10th grade to meaningful postsecondary goals and preparation is an opportunity to better prepare students for later success. To this point, school professionals also suggested repeating the use of YouScience at multiple points in a student’s high school experience, rather than just once in the 9th grade, in order to further develop students’ career and postsecondary interests throughout high school.

Low capacity for coordination of advising within individual schools means students remain under-advised

School professionals face high caseloads, mission creep in which their primary student duties are often supplanted with other needs within the school, and limited access to students. One school counselor described a specific dilemma in which they felt unsure of how to best respond to a parent who had reached out for help completing college applications with their student. Should the school counselor jump in and assist, even though they were already operating at their maximum capacity and didn’t really have the time? Or should they refer the parent to a community partner they knew had more capacity, thus ceding any role they had to play in postsecondary planning? If they referred the parent to the community partner, would the parent complain to the school that they weren’t getting the support they should?

There are gray areas in terms of who should own the college and career advising space. Significantly, no professional we interviewed identified coordination of advising services as something for which they are responsible. Principals have a clear role in determining which partners the school will welcome and can set broad priorities, but no one seems to be working on day-to-day activity coordination around advising. This is due to structural constraints faced by counselors, including high caseloads and a range of non-advising job responsibilities within their schools. For students and families, the result seems to be highly variable depending on the mix of professionals to which they have access. Small pockets of students who seek out community partners and other supports are getting the advising they need, but capacity does not exist to engage in matching or referring students systematically to ensure that students who are not initially oriented to postsecondary are receiving advising, too. Overall, it appears that some college and career advising needs are going unmet; additional advising capacity is needed so that every student and family can receive high-quality advising and support.

There are opportunities to provide data and information to inform advising

In the course of these interviews, multiple ideas for efficiencies around data and information to inform advising emerged from MNPS professionals.

Match Academy Coaches and school counselors to Career Academies more deliberately

The process by which Academy Coaches and school counselors are assigned to Academies occurs at the discretion of each high school principal. In the course of their work, both Academy Coaches and school counselors develop expertise around the Academy pathway or pathways with which they work most closely. Some have past professional experiences or immediate family members in aligned career fields. However, school professionals do not feel their Academy-specific expertise is a factor that is considered when matching them with their Academy. A more deliberate matching process that takes existing expertise into account may help school counselors and Coaches in new schools act as informed resources more quickly.

Provide Academy-specific training and informational resources to Academy Coaches and school counselors

MNPS professionals reported that they do not receive professional training specific to the Career Academies in their schools. These professionals expressed that it is their responsibility to do independent research on the career fields for their respective Academy, including occupational and postsecondary matches to the pathway. Each professional conducts this research from scratch and only after they are already in their coach or counselor role. They clearly take pride in this work, but also noted that this is not something for which they always have abundant time. There may be an opportunity to create common high-quality informational resources and trainings for each Academy at the district level, allowing coaches and school counselors to spend more time on other duties.

Create a feedback loop for postsecondary data sharing with high school administrators, faculty, and staff

Each spring, MNPS administers a senior survey that assesses student postsecondary plans. While one interviewee mentioned challenges related to counselors successfully administering the survey, overall this informational tool was widely used and quoted by the professionals we interviewed. At the same time, almost all expressed a desire for actual matriculation data, which they feel is more accurate than the survey data. School professionals expressed the understanding that these data exist, but they do not have the capacity to seek them out. There are many ways these data could be provided not only to coaches and counselors, but also to administrators and teachers.

From a best practice perspective, access to the data as well as time to engage with and reflect upon it is a critical step in postsecondary pathway awareness within high schools. Disaggregating the data by race/ethnicity and student subgroup is also an important best practice that should be incorporated. MNPS has access to National Student Clearinghouse data that could be analyzed and presented for each school. They could also choose to partner with community organizations and/or institutions of higher education to share the data and engage in deeper discussion around the ways in which students could be supported as they work to attain a postsecondary credential.

College and Career Advising by Community Partners

Through surveys and interviews, five Nashville college access and success programs were engaged to share their college and career advising practices. None of these organizations serves all New Skills Ready schools; and each New Skills Ready school has a mix of community partners providing college and career advisement, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Service by Nashville College and Career Advising Organizations in Four Service High Schools

Organization	Program	John Overton	Maplewood	Pearl-Cohn	Whites Creek
Conexión Américas	Escalera	X			
Martha O'Bryan Center	Academic Student Union (ASU)		X		
Oasis Center	Oasis College Connection (OCC)	X		(X)	X
YMCA of Middle Tennessee	Black Achievers		(X)	X	X
	Latino Achievers (YLA)	X	X		

X – Actively Working (X) – Establishing or Reestablishing Relationship

The relationship with each school remains in flux from year to year as community partner and school staff teams experience turnover. In general, time and intensity of services translates to more durable partnerships – those equipped to endure despite staff turnover. Perhaps the most institutionalized school relationship is that of Martha O'Bryan and Maplewood; but even in that case, the role and services of the partner can shift over time, particularly when new principals come onboard and relationships and trust must be reestablished. Profiles of each community partner organization are included as part of an appendix to this report. No matter the organization, community partners benefit New Skills Ready schools in ways that our research showed to be consistent across schools.

Dedicated, trained, and experienced college and career advisors

The advising resources provided by community partner organizations provide critical human capital toward postsecondary success, often at either no cost to MNPS or at a cost much lower than that of providing similar supports in-house. Although exact job titles vary by organization, community partner professionals who are in postsecondary advising roles have college access and success as a core job function. As a result, they receive extensive on-the-job training through their organizations and will then, over time, build up increased expertise and relationships that allow them to connect students to postsecondary and career opportunities. Table 3 shows the number of college and career advisors these organizations supply just to the New Skills Ready schools; all of these organizations also serve additional MNPS high schools and depending on their program model, may employ a larger number of total advisors beyond what is captured in Table 3. In particular, Black Achievers also serves students in private high schools and in public high schools in surrounding counties.

Table 3: College and Career Advising Personnel for New Skills Ready Schools Students

Organization and Program	Advisors	Roles and Structure
Conexión Américas – Escalera	3	GEAR UP advisor, Escalera advisor, and postsecondary coach
Martha O'Bryan – ASU	3	High school transition coach, postsecondary success coach, AmeriCorps high school transition support
Oasis Center – OCC	4	Advising manager with caseload, advising coordinator with caseload, college access mentor, student success advocate
YMCA – Black Achievers	2	Advising manager with caseload and Pathway Navigator for work-based learning shared with YLA
YMCA - YLA	3	Advising manager with caseload, advisor, and Pathway Navigator for work-based learning shared with Black Achievers

Increases in funding allow these organizations to add additional advisors – thereby serving a greater number of students. Some of their work is funded by GEAR UP Nashville, but they each have their own diverse funding streams from a variety of sources.

Postsecondary option vetting and partnerships specific to student population needs

Each community partner organization has a different way of defining the population of students they serve. In the models of Martha O'Bryan Academic Student Unions and Oasis College Connection, advising services are offered to every student in a partner school. YLA and Black Achievers are broadly available to students who self-identify by race, ethnicity, or immigration status and are seeking support for their postsecondary goals. As part of their funding structure, Escalera must form a student cohort and serve students who would be the first in their families to attend college, with an emphasis on serving Latinx students. Cohorts are capped at 25 students per grade.

Given this varied focus in populations served, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are also critical differences in the ways these community organizations approach partnership with postsecondary institutions. YLA serves significant populations of undocumented or under-documented students, and are not partnering closely with public institutions that are financially out of reach for their students, but are engaging private colleges deeply. Escalera has built a lot of expertise around careful advising and planning for undocumented and underdocumented students, but these student populations are not the majority of students served. As a result, Escalera is engaging private colleges deeply but also continuing to build stronger relationships with public institutions, especially Nashville State. Oasis has a close relationship with Nashville State and other public options in Middle Tennessee, but also forges relationships with admissions recruiters nationwide. Black Achievers exposes students to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and has seen increased interest and outreach from Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in recent years. For both institution types, Black Achievers is working with students to determine if these options will be a good fit, including a good financial fit. These specific college relationships are the result of deep technical knowledge and expertise.

Community partners are also cognizant of the role they play in exposing students to institutions with which students are otherwise unfamiliar. They carefully use data and program alumni experiences to identify colleges at which their students will be able to experience social, academic, and financial success. In the course of formal programming - like college tours and virtual admissions Q&As - as well as through one-on-one conversations with students about their college options, advisors aim to introduce their students to colleges at which they are likely to succeed. However, each program also ensures that students have power and agency to make their own decisions about where to enroll in college, sometimes with input from family members.

Technical expertise on admissions, financial aid, and matriculation processes

All of the community partner organizations have long histories of college and career advising, and have developed both relationships and technical expertise they can leverage to assist students with the college admissions, financial aid, and matriculation processes. Some of the processes in which community partners have developed relationships and expertise include:

- FAFSA filing, particularly helping students navigate unusual circumstances on the FAFSA form
- Verification, which low-income students are disproportionately selected for and which they are often navigating over the summer before they begin postsecondary in the fall
- Postsecondary options, scholarships, and support available for students who are undocumented or under-documented, as college affordability can be uniquely challenging for these students
- Ensuring students have completed processes related to successful matriculation, like admission offer acceptance, housing (if applicable), financial aid award acceptance, and course registration
- Seamless enrollment, including ensuring students have successfully committed to and enrolled in their postsecondary option, and connecting students to people on campus who can be relied upon to help them if needed

Resources and expertise on postsecondary advisement, youth development, and cultural competency

Community partner organizations bring ideas, curricular resources, and research related to youth development and cultural competency into their work with students. Every program except Oasis College Connection has a curriculum they are implementing for some of their college and career advising. Martha O'Bryan uses a work-ready skills curriculum supported by employers to help high school freshmen develop the soft skills employers find valuable. The Escalera program, developed by UnidosUS in partnership with 35+ affiliate sites nationwide, prepares Latinx students for college and career utilizing a cohort approach. YLA uses a research-based curriculum from the University of Chicago but is trialing another option. Oasis College Connection has used past program data to identify the tipping point at which students enroll in postsecondary education (i.e. at least five hours of one-on-one advising) and targets services toward getting young people to that tipping point. This type of predictive outcome targeting is used by other college access and success organizations nationwide, but does not seem to be a strategy currently used by MNPS advising professionals based upon our interviews.

Community partner organizations also cultivate expertise in cultural competency for the specific student populations they serve. Many programs have advisors with backgrounds similar to those of their students; and advisors who organize career exposure activities often focus on helping students see people from backgrounds like their own in an array of careers. This is a particular focus for Escalera, YLA, and Black Achievers. Community partners also engage families in culturally competent ways, particularly recent immigrant and refugee families for whom social norms may be challenging to navigate as students complete financial aid applications, attend classes at night, or live on-campus.

Data on college and career advising results and outcomes

Each community partner organization maintains a database they use to track not only student engagement in their programs but also key milestones on postsecondary enrollment. Partners typically track things like college and scholarship applications completed, FAFSAs filed, and postsecondary matriculation. Community partners also collect data on student postsecondary outcomes. Escalera, Martha O'Bryan, and Oasis Center use National Student Clearinghouse data to evaluate where students enroll, persist, and complete degrees. Black Achievers and YLA all maintain contact and programmatic ties with students to keep up with their postsecondary experiences. All programs use these data to refine their programming and program design in addition to reporting on outcomes to funders and other key stakeholders. Although community partners often collect data in which MNPS high schools would likely be interested, only Martha O'Bryan mentioned a reciprocal information

and data sharing process with a high school. At Maplewood, school counselors update ASU staff on FAFSA completions using E*GRandS data; and Martha O'Bryan shares scholarship information with the school. Martha O'Bryan's unique relationship with Maplewood as a school-embedded program (a program with dedicated space inside the school building) likely facilitates this type of reciprocal data sharing.

Support for students as they transition to postsecondary

Each of these programs continues to support alumni in postsecondary in some way. All community partners are staffed year-round and can assist students in navigating challenges to matriculation, thereby reducing summer melt. However, the postsecondary supports provided by these programs often go deeper than just resolving enrollment challenges. Martha O'Bryan and Escalera have postsecondary success elements to their program offerings in which dedicated postsecondary success professionals check in with students and provide support for them regardless of the specific institution in which a student enrolls. Each of these supports are voluntary, but programs report that large percentages of students who engaged with their organizations during high school continue to receive support in the postsecondary years.

Oasis provides dedicated postsecondary success professionals at Nashville State Community College, a top destination for their MNPS students. These success professionals are embedded at Nashville State within a dedicated resource center in order to help students navigate systems and processes specific to that institution. YLA and Black Achievers recently formed a partnership with Persist Nashville that provides postsecondary support for their students as a cohort. Persist Nashville and the YMCA Achievers programs work collaboratively to provide updates on how students are doing and leverage the Achievers program team's relationships when students may need someone familiar to reach out and check in with them.

Opportunities to leverage community partners

Community partners already bring strong assets to New Skills Ready schools; but our interviews revealed some additional areas of opportunity. Although we believe action in each of these areas would strengthen advising, it is important to remember that capacity for school professionals is still a limiting factor, which we discuss at length in the MNPS professionals section of the report.

Access to students

Access to students during the school day is a challenge for community partners just as it is for MNPS professionals. Every community partner we interviewed noted between one and three individuals in their New Skills Ready service schools who have acted as a "game-changer" in terms of their school partnerships and access to students; in other words, the persistent efforts of these school staff have opened doors for community partners that may otherwise have remained closed. While there are a number of dedicated professionals in MNPS working to help students connect with community partners, these particular stories emphasized individuals who went above and beyond, implying that this type of partnership is the exception rather than their consistent experience. Both community partners and New Skills Ready schools experience high rates of staff turnover. We would encourage innovative thinking and new strategies that create institutionalized forms of partnership and access. Right now, community partners spend a lot of time building and rebuilding school partner relationships. The easier the school partnership is for them, the more time they can spend on student advisement.

Access to data to inform advising

As noted in the section on data tracking, there is relatively little data sharing currently in place between community partners and their partner high schools. Martha O'Bryan has consistent access to daily grade and attendance data they can use in their advising. Oasis and Conexión Américas have data-sharing agreements that

will soon come online as part of their work on the GEAR UP Nashville project. Black Achievers and YLA aren't accessing any student data from MNPS or their partner high schools. Two data access elements we recommend be prioritized as part of New Skills Ready include:

1. Access to YouScience: None of the community partners reports that they are able to access student reports in YouScience. Because YouScience offers valuable insight into student aptitudes, interests, skills and knowledge, this is an unfortunate barrier. These reports and the data they contain would be a valuable resource to community partners who are having deep one-on-one engagement with students. If YouScience-focused trainings are held for MNPS professionals, it would also be valuable to include community partner advisors in such trainings.
2. MNPS email addresses: Access to district email addresses for community partner organizations would allow their advisors to more easily get in touch with MNPS students and families. Moreover, district email accounts would help grant access to various technology tools that require email validation. Other school districts, like Atlanta and Austin, have facilitated school email accounts for advising partners who are not district employees.

Outcomes data to demonstrate impact and attract funding

An earlier section of this report recommended creating a feedback loop of postsecondary outcomes data for schools. Including community partners in those data feedback loops would equip them with data they need to attract new funding or sustain current funding for their college and career advising activities. Sharing National Student Clearinghouse aggregate reports with school partners would be an easy way to engage these experienced professionals in district or school-level goal setting and/or program planning related to postsecondary matriculation and success.

Collaborate and partner on career pathways

Many of the community partner organizations currently engage in career exposure work, and the YMCA Achievers programs offer students access to work-based learning through multi-day job shadow opportunities. Conexión Americas, Martha O'Bryan, and Oasis Center are all Opportunity NOW partners who help to support students in internship placements during the summer. Some partners also expressed an interest in developing resources, support, and programming to advise students who aren't interested or able to enroll in postsecondary right after high school, which would be pivots away from their historical program models. Engaging more deeply with these community organizations on supporting career pathways is a strategy New Skills Ready should use to ensure said pathways are aligned to youth development, cultural competency, and postsecondary success.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nashville is lucky to have such a rich and varied set of college and career advising supports spanning both MNPS professionals and community partner advisors. Undoubtedly, excellent work is occurring; but consistent, high-quality college and career advising for every student is still lacking. School-based professionals are challenged by high caseloads and duties outside direct and indirect student support. As a result, school professionals lack the capacity to coordinate advising across their entire student population. GEAR UP Nashville and community partner staff have constrained access to students, limiting their effectiveness and creating pockets of students with excellent support and outcomes while other students receive little to no support.

Themes that emerged in the course of our interviews point to specific recommendations for increasing access to high-quality college and career advising in New Skills Ready schools:

- Collaborate with GEAR UP Nashville and community partners to align college and career advising resources effectively. Solving capacity issues that limit school professionals' ability to facilitate access, ownership, and coordination of career advisement is a critical step in ensuring students get the support they need to access postsecondary pathways leading to high-growth, high wage jobs. First steps could include giving community partners access to YouScience, MNPS email accounts, and data and reports on postsecondary outcomes that could be used to demonstrate impact and attract funding, allowing for more MNPS students to be served by those programs.
- Develop resources, trainings, and Academy matching processes to more efficiently provide pathway information to Academy Coaches and school counselors. Data and information on occupations and postsecondary pathways with stackable credentials would be an asset to these professionals and allow them more time to work directly with students. Professionals discussed needs for these supports to be flexible and nimble informational tools they can use in the course of conversations with students.
- Create a postsecondary outcomes feedback loop to allow school faculty and staff to learn about, engage deeply with, and set goals around postsecondary matriculation, retention, and attainment. Disaggregate outcomes by race/ethnicity and student subgroup to identify and tackle inequitable outcomes. Community partner organizations have valuable data and insights to add here, and MNPS should share National Student Clearinghouse aggregated reports with community partners as well as with MNPS professionals.
- Partner with community organizations on college and career advising, particularly around career pathways. Leveraging these organizations' technical knowledge and relationships on postsecondary, expertise in youth development and cultural competency, and desire to deeply engage in pathways work would benefit students, families, and the New Skills Ready project overall.

Conexión Américas Escalera

New Skills Ready Schools: John Overton

Other MNPS Schools Served: Cane Ridge, Glenclyff

	Grade Level				
	5-8	9-10	11	12	After HS
Aspiring to college and developing college knowledge					
<i>Academic preparation accessing advanced courses, tutoring, standardized test prep</i>					
Career awareness exposure to careers, assessing strengths/interests, exploring college majors/programs of study					
<i>Affordability how to pay for college, financial aid applications, scholarships</i>					
Fit and match visiting and researching colleges, developing list of colleges to apply to, engaging with admissions offices					
<i>College applications and enrolling in college</i>					
Career preparation internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, resume building					
<i>Transitioning to postsecondary orientation, enrolling in classes, connecting to campus</i>					

Career Advising and Work-Based Learning

- Escalera curriculum highlights STEM options but program encourages exploration of humanities and all other career options.
- Career panels create opportunities for students to gain exposure different career fields and professionals from similar backgrounds to their own.
- Students in 11th grade are practicing interview and resume building skills, and receive support applying or matching to internships, particularly through OpportunityNow.

Post-High School Support

- Students opt in to receive postsecondary support from a dedicated advisor; uptake is high.
- Cohort-based program model provides sense of family and participants continue these peer support networks informally while in postsecondary.

Data Access and Use

- Data sharing access through GEAR UP and English Learner offices in MNPS. Ad hoc data access to assist with pushes for TN Promise application and FAFSA completion during virtual learning.
- Uses database to track student outcomes related to grant funding.
- Small cohorts and relationships with postsecondary advisor allow postsecondary outcome tracking for most students because they stay in touch.

45

New Skills Ready
Students Estimated
Served Monthly

70

Students Served by
Each Advisor

1-2

Years the Average
Advisor is in Place

11-20

Hours of Individual
Advising for Average
Student

Martha O'Bryan Center Academic Student Union (ASU)

New Skills Ready School: Maplewood

Other MNPS Schools Served: Hunters Lane, Stratford

	Grade Level				
	5-8	9-10	11	12	After HS
Aspiring to college and developing college knowledge					
Academic preparation <i>accessing advanced courses, tutoring, standardized test prep</i>					
Career awareness <i>exposure to careers, assessing strengths/interests, exploring college majors/programs of study</i>					
Affordability <i>how to pay for college, financial aid applications, scholarships</i>					
Fit and match <i>visiting and researching colleges, developing list of colleges to apply to, engaging with admissions offices</i>					
College applications and enrolling in college					
Career preparation <i>internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, resume building</i>					
Transitioning to postsecondary <i>orientation, enrolling in classes, connecting to campus</i>					

Career Advising and Work-Based Learning

- Implements **career readiness curriculum** supported by employers to help students develop professional behaviors and soft skills.
- **Individual conversations** guided by student interests and academic performance. Discuss education and training needed, other similar options, salary ranges with the student.

Post-High School Support

- Students opt in to **postsecondary program providing check-ins and visits to monitor success**; support; engagement with students and postsecondary program starts senior year.
- Wraparound **cradle to career services also accessible** by graduates including support for basic needs like housing and food, WIOA job placement program and more.

Data Access and Use

- Formalized **data sharing agreement with MNPS allows close to real-time access** to attendance, grades, and other indicators of academic success.
- Agency and Maplewood **share data and work collaboratively** to capture needed elements around FAFSA, scholarship, and other data points.
- Uses National Student Clearinghouse to collect data on **postsecondary outcomes**.

225

New Skills Ready
Students Estimated
Served Monthly

100-125

Students Served by
Each Advisor

5

Years the Average
Advisor is in Place

11-20

Hours of Individual
Advising for Average
Student

Oasis Center *Oasis College Connection (OCC)*

New Skills Ready Schools: John Overton, Pearl-Cohn, Whites Creek

Other MNPS Schools Served: Academy at Hickory Hollow, Academy at Old Cockrill, Antioch, Big Picture, Cane Ridge, Glencliff, Hillsboro, Hillwood

	Grade Level				
	5-8	9-10	11	12	After HS
Aspiring to college and developing college knowledge	📌	📌	📌	📌	📌
Academic preparation <i>accessing advanced courses, tutoring, standardized test prep</i>			📌	📌	📌
Career awareness <i>exposure to careers, assessing strengths/interests, exploring college majors/programs of study</i>	📌	📌	📌	📌	📌
Affordability <i>how to pay for college, financial aid applications, scholarships</i>	📌	📌	📌	📌	📌
Fit and match <i>visiting and researching colleges, developing list of colleges to apply to, engaging with admissions offices</i>	📌	📌	📌	📌	📌
College applications and enrolling in college				📌	📌
Career preparation <i>internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, resume building</i>	📌	📌	📌	📌	📌
Transitioning to postsecondary <i>orientation, enrolling in classes, connecting to campus</i>				📌	📌

Career Advising and Work-Based Learning

- **Individual conversations** guided by student interests. Focus on encouraging exploration, exposure to new career ideas, and how high school and postsecondary tie in.

Post-High School Support

- Robust **postsecondary support at Nashville State's main campus** including tutoring and academic support, basic needs like housing and transportation, and college navigation. Program results in 70-80% retention rate for students served.
- NSCC students receive **transfer and career exposure and advisement** as they transition to the next step.

Data Access and Use

- **Data sharing MOU with MNPS in progress** as part of GEAR UP partnership. Ad hoc data access to assist with pushes for TN Promise application and FAFSA completion during virtual learning.
- Uses National Student Clearinghouse to collect data on **postsecondary outcomes**.
- Targets **interventions based on historical analysis of predictors of postsecondary success** for Oasis students; 5 individual hours per student is target for services.

695

New Skills Ready
Students Estimated
Served Monthly

450

Students Served by
Each Advisor

1-2

Years the Average
Advisor is in Place

0-10

Hours of Individual
Advising for Average
Student

YMCA of Middle Tennessee *Black Achievers*

New Skills Ready Schools: Whites Creek, Pearl-Cohn

Other MNPS Schools: Antioch, Cane Ridge, East Magnet, Glenduff, Hillsboro, Hillwood, Hume-Fogg, KIPP Nashville Collegiate, Knowledge Academies, Lead Academy, MLK, McGavock, NSA, Valor College Prep

	Grade Level				
	5-8	9-10	11	12	After HS
Aspiring to college and developing college knowledge					
Academic preparation <i>accessing advanced courses, tutoring, standardized test prep</i>					
Career awareness <i>exposure to careers, assessing strengths/interests, exploring college majors/programs of study</i>					
Affordability <i>how to pay for college, financial aid applications, scholarships</i>					
Fit and match <i>visiting and researching colleges, developing list of colleges to apply to, engaging with admissions offices</i>					
College applications and enrolling in college					
Career preparation <i>internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, resume building</i>					
Transitioning to postsecondary <i>orientation, enrolling in classes, connecting to campus</i>					

Career Advising and Work-Based Learning

- Focus on **exposure to career fields through tours and engagement with Black professionals** working in those industries.
- Survey students to determine interests but also **use labor market information to identify growth career fields students** may not be aware of like IT and intentionally expose to those as well.
- Match to and support students during interest-aligned **job shadow opportunities over fall, spring, and summer breaks with area employers.**
- **Offer opportunities to interact with professionals** in normal club settings and specialized events to learn more about their field and career journey

Post-High School Support

- Maintain **informal connection points with students** due to highly relational program model.
- Additional of new staff member has allowed **recent expansion into alumni engagement**
- **Partnership with Persist Nashville** to provide additional post-secondary support throughout their college career
- **Provide scholarship opportunity** for former BA high school students currently enrolled at two or four year institution

Data Access and Use

- **Survey students on college and career interests** and tailor programming to student preferences as well as growth areas that may not be on their radar.
- **Use data to determine which colleges to expose** and provide college tours and other programming based on the information.
- **Track engagement and college milestones** like applications completed through agency database.
- **Conduct post survey** to determine if students think or feel differently about themselves because of their experiences in the program
- **Track overall engagement**, which includes participation in club meetings and events and activities

6

New Skills Ready
Students Estimated
Served Monthly

40

Students Served
by all Staff

1-2

Years the Average
Advisor is in Place

0-10

Hours of Individual
Advising for Average
Student

YMCA of Middle Tennessee *Latino Achievers (YLA)*

New Skills Ready School: John Overton, Maplewood

Other MNPS Schools Served: Antioch, Cane Ridge, Glenclyff, Hillwood, Hume-Fogg, Hunters Lane, Johnson Alternative Learning Center, MLK, McGavock, STEM Prep, Valor College Prep

	Grade Level				
	5-8	9-10	11	12	After HS
Aspiring to college and developing college knowledge		📌	📌	📌	
Academic preparation <i>accessing advanced courses, tutoring, standardized test prep</i>		📌	📌	📌	
Career awareness <i>exposure to careers, assessing strengths/interests, exploring college majors/programs of study</i>		📌	📌	📌	
Affordability <i>how to pay for college, financial aid applications, scholarships</i>			📌	📌	
Fit and match <i>visiting and researching colleges, developing list of colleges to apply to, engaging with admissions offices</i>		📌	📌	📌	
College applications and enrolling in college			📌	📌	
Career preparation <i>internships, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing, resume building</i>		📌	📌	📌	
Transitioning to postsecondary <i>orientation, enrolling in classes, connecting to campus</i>			📌	📌	

Career Advising and Work-Based Learning

- Regularly expose students to workplaces they are interested in through World of Work tours and social media. Target professionals who come from similar backgrounds to students.
- Match to and support students during interest-aligned job shadow opportunities over fall, spring, and summer breaks with area employers.
- Funding and partnerships with employers like Nissan, Google, and State Farm lead to additional exposure; employers recommend areas of focus like coding bootcamps for Google.
- Increased focus on short term credentials, especially for students who are not college-bound.

Post-High School Support

- Maintain informal connection points with students due to highly relational program model.
- Recently began a formal partnership with Persist Nashville to provide postsecondary support to students in a cohort model.

Data Access and Use

- Survey students on college and career interests and tailor programming to student preferences.
- Track student completion of key milestones to college that are predictors of persistence.
- Implement research-based curriculum and utilize research on cultural competence for hiring/training of staff.

16

New Skills Ready
Students Estimated
Served Monthly

40

Students Served by
Each Advisor

1-2

Years the Average
Advisor is in Place

0-10

Hours of Individual
Advising for Average
Student

References

- ⁱ Data from Tennessee Department of Education 2019-2020 Report Card; subgroup populations defined by TDOE <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/report-card.html>
- ⁱⁱ Lumina Foundation Stronger Nation Report 2021 <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2021/#state/TN>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Data from the National Student Clearinghouse indicate undergraduate enrollment from all racial and ethnic groups declined for the Fall 2020 term. Enrollment declines were most significant for Native American and Black students, and steepest declines were in the public community college sector, which enrolls higher proportions of low-income students and students of color than other sectors. Data on enrollment trends related to Covid-19 is located at: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/>
- ^{iv} Data on U.S. Enrollment from the National Center for Education Statistics. Tennessee and MNPS enrollment data from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Fact Books. NSR schools data from Nashville Public Education Foundation 2018-2020 Bridge to Completion Reports.
- ^v Bridge to Completion report series documenting postsecondary enrollment patterns of MNPS graduates is available at <https://nashvillepef.org/resources/>
- ^{vi} Completion data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for data year 2019. Completion rates are calculated at within 150% of time to credential. For 4-year institutions, data are from the 2013 cohort and for 2-year institutions, data are from the 2016 cohort.
- ^{vii} American School Counselor Association Counselor Roles and Ratios <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>
- ^{viii} Data from the National Center for Education Statistics 2018-19 Academic Year <https://nces.ed.gov/CCD/ELSI/>
- ^{ix} There is a large body of research on this topic that examines both how schools facilitate access to counselors and other advising professionals and how school culture around college-going shape postsecondary enrollment outcomes. A few examples of this research are included below:
- Engberg, M. E., & Wolniak, G. C. (2010). Examining the Effects of High School Contexts on Postsecondary Enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(2), 132–153.
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- Hill, D. H. (2008). School Strategies and the “College-Linking” Process: Reconsidering the effects of high schools on college enrollment. *Sociology of Education*, 81(1), 53–76.
- Perna, L. W., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Thomas, S. L., Bell, A., Anderson, R., & Li, C. (2008). The role of college counseling in shaping college opportunity: Variations across high schools. *The Review of Higher Education*, 31(2), 131–159.
- Robinson, K.J. and Roksa, J. (2016). Counselors, Information, and High School College-Going Culture: Inequalities in the college application process. *Research in Higher Education*, v57 n7 p845-868.