METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Staying in touch with students and families
Explore the concrete ways Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) employed “Power Strategies” that address critical student needs now and lay a sustainable foundation for lasting improvement.

Learn more and see examples here.
One of the great casualties of this whole pandemic is relationships.

— Paul Reville, Harvard Education Professor

[The Navigator Program] is the virtual equivalent of talking to students in the hallway.

— Keri Randolph, Executive Officer in MNPS
IN NASHVILLE:

#1 Empowering, Adaptable Instruction

#2 Time & Attention

#3 The Teaching Job

#4 Relationships & Social-Emotional Support

#5 Family & Community Partnerships

See Snapshot of Nashville
In Spring 2020, MNPS went remote.

District leaders, school leaders, and principals faced the same question as hundreds of others across the country: **How do we stay connected to students and families and ensure they get the support they need during this crisis?**

**Students’ Experiences in Spring 2020**

- Missed out on the **touchpoints** with school staff they would have had in-person
- Observable **gaps in student engagement and performance** for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds
- Dealt with higher demand for many **social services** that became less easily accessible in the remote context
MNPS needed a program that would...

**WHAT THEY DID**

- **Re-engage** students and families who weren’t participating in online learning.
- Ensure students had the **technology** and tech support they needed.
- Connect students and families to **services and resources**, such as food and mental health.
HOW THEY DID IT

MNPS implemented a districtwide “Navigators” program to touch base with students and families on a regular basis and connect them with needed services. The district used its existing resources in three key ways...

1. Have 5,600 MNPS staff members work as Navigators with caseloads of 6-12 students each.

2. Establish a system for referring families to school counselors and social workers.

3. Provide help from central office to recruit Navigators and provide guidance about topics and approaches for reaching out to families.
HOW THEY DID IT:
Have 5,600 MNPS staff members work as Navigators with caseloads of 6-12 students each. Roughly half of the district's staff serve as Navigators.

65% are teachers.

Navigators also include central office staff, cafeteria staff, and administrative assistants.

A Navigator's role includes...
- Touching base one-on-one with students and families on a regular basis
- Providing ad-hoc supports around technology, academic needs, or social-emotional needs
- Connecting students and families to needed services, including:
  - Technology, internet, or learning materials
  - Counseling and social-work services
  - Food and/or housing services

*These duties are currently an additional responsibility, on top of existing roles. No supplemental pay or additional time in the daily schedule is currently provided.
MNPS instituted an online referral system to allow Navigators to flag issues or needs that students and families were raising.

School-based counselors and social workers then receive notifications if a student in their school is referred for additional services, and can follow up with the Navigator or the family directly.

In the fall of 2020, this led to over 1,500 Collaborative Referrals in MNPS.
HOW THEY DID IT:
Provide *help from central office* to recruit Navigators and provide guidance about topics and approaches for reaching out to families.

- District leadership designed the **initial concept** of the program and stressed it as a “non-negotiable” for the district this year. They support implementation by **recruiting Navigators and matching them to students**.

- They also created a **“script” for Navigators** to follow during calls with families, including a set of standard checks to ask about in every call and optional reflection and discussion prompts.

- The central office team is **collecting and analyzing data from Navigator’s calls**, so they can highlight emerging trends in student and family need, as well as measure the efficacy of the program.
The Navigator program has resulted in...

- Nearly all **83,000 students** being assigned a Navigator this fall*
- **180,000** check-ins with students and their families, addressing academic, social-emotional, and other needs
- **1,500 Collaborative Referrals**, where Navigators connected students and families to necessary resources and services

* 3% of students opted out of Navigator calls

"It’s great to know that our school is reaching out to us and offering their support."

MNPS PARENT
1 CONTINUING NAVIGATORS DURING IN-PERSON SCHOOL
Although the program was designed to address the needs of remote school, MNPS plans to continue Navigators when in-person school resumes because it aligns with the district’s goal of “every student known.”

2 ENSURING CONTINUITY OF RELATIONSHIPS
The district plans for pairings between Navigators and students to exist for as long as that student attends that given school. When moving schools, students will be carefully transitioned to a new Navigator at their new school.

3 DEEPENING THE ROLE OF CENTRAL OFFICE
Central office will provide technical support during ongoing implementation, and will help to coordinate Navigators’ duties when students change schools within the district.
As part of their next steps, MNPS could also focus on building toward...

- **Allocating Protected Time for Navigator Duties**
  By shifting existing school schedules, the district could create designated time during the school day for Navigators to carry out their responsibilities; or by designating time after school and providing participating staff with stipends.

- **Integrating With Other Supports**
  Navigators could integrate their work with existing multi-tiered systems of support and identification processes that are in place to flag and monitor students’ needs. Designated time for Navigators to do their work would help make this more efficient.

- **Coordinating Wraparound Services at Schools**
  Continuing to strengthen the district’s relationships with community partners will increase the ability to connect students and families to the resources and services they need.

- **Ensuring Sufficient Access to Counseling and Social Work Services**
  Leveraging relationships with community partners or increasing support staff will help ensure that counselors and social workers have the capacity required to address the student needs surfaced by Navigators.
DISTRICT SNAPSHOT

ENROLLMENT

~86,000 STUDENTS
163 Schools

FUN FACT

MNPS is divided into 12 “clusters” or zones. Each cluster feeds into its own high school.

You can explore information about each cluster here.
ARTIFACTS

- The 74 Million article, “Nashville’s ‘Navigator’ Tries to Keep Students in Remote Learning From Getting Lost in the System”
- *(Watch Right)* News Channel 5 Nashville’s story, “MNPS ‘navigators’ aim to fight the district’s attendance problem”

RELATED

- Evidence-Based Practices for Assessing Students’ Social & Emotional Well-Being, EdResearch for Recovery
- Policy Recommendations for Implementing the Framework for Safe and Successful Schools, NASP
- Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, Aspen Institute & Education Resource Strategies
- The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL Essentials, CASEL
- Supporting the Social & Emotional Learning of Systematically Marginalized Students in a Pandemic, National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens, EdTrust
- The District Leader’s Guide to SEL and Equity, Panorama Education