2016

Nashville Superintendent's Transition Team Report on Student Achievement

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Preamble

Nashville is one of the most dynamic major cities in the United States. Its contributions to American culture and identity are singular, endowing it with an important and inimitable place in American history. At the same time, it is a city that is changing at warp speed and whose future hangs in the balance. Few cities in the nation have faced such rapid economic, cultural, and demographic shifts. Yet Nashville is a city whose talent, diversity, and resolve equip it to do what many other cities have not been able to do—that is, use its changes to define a better future for everyone.

No institution in Nashville will be more important to this transition than its public school system. It is through the school house door that the city's fortunes will flow in a kaleidoscopic of colors, languages, and cultures—children all dreaming of contributing to their community, their country, and their generation. And in turn, it will be the community's—and its schools'—open arms and high expectations that will determine whether or not these children—and the city itself—will succeed.

This is the promise and great challenge of Nashville's public schools. The city's schools have done important work over the years, but they are being called on now to elevate their standards and expectations for all children – children that the city may have given short shrift to in another day and age. It will mean seeing every child and the experiences they bring as an asset. It will require taking shared responsibility for the attainment of all students, not just some. And it will compel everyone—teachers, principals, district staff, leadership, the school board, and external stakeholders—to collaborate in ways they have not always done in the past to ensure the city's children have full access to high-quality instruction.

This will require the public's elected officials on the school board to renew their focus on the academic welfare of all children. It will demand that new leaders think carefully about what has worked in the past and needs to be kept, and what needs to be tossed aside. It also necessitates a complete examination of the system from top to bottom to make sure that every element works for children, not against them. Because the purpose of our public schools is not to reflect the inequities that society presents but to help overcome them.

The work ahead will start with leadership and will focus on reading. Every indicator says that our children do not read as well as they need to in order to master the mathematics, history, and science they will need to thrive. The challenge will not be made easier by the fact that many newcomers are learning English for the first time, and that many students of long-standing residents have not had access to the rich and complex language they will need to flourish in a new world.

One of the lasting legacies of the city of Nashville is the central role it played in the civil rights movement. The warriors of those historical battles will recall that they were not

fought to ensure access to mediocrity; they were fought over access to excellence. The city's trajectory depends now on rekindling that passion for equity and excellence.

Introduction

The Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools is the second largest school district in Tennessee and one of the largest school districts in the nation. The district itself is one of some 65 departments within the Metropolitan Nashville City Government. The school district is governed by a nine-member board of education whose members are elected to four-year staggered terms by region of the city. The board also has two student representatives drawn from the district's Student Advisory Council.

The school district, which encompasses much of Davidson County, Tennessee, and encompasses 533 square miles, enrolls some 88,000 students in approximately 130 schools of varying kinds. The district has about 76 elementary schools, 32 middle schools, and 22 high schools. In addition, the district has a number of charter schools, alternative schools, pre-k programs, theme schools and career academies, and other offerings. Approximately 45 percent of the district's enrollment is comprised of African American students, about 30 percent are white, some 21 percent are Hispanic, and four percent are Asian American. More than 20,000 students are considered English learners, and the vast majority of the district's students are eligible to receive a federal lunch subsidy.

In addition, the school system, which has no independent taxing authority, has a budget of approximately $843 million for the 2016-17 school year, and it employs some 8,930 individuals, about 5,000 of whom are teaching staff.

The elected school board has recently hired a new superintendent, Shawn Joseph, to lead the district's schools. Joseph comes from the Prince George's County public school district in Maryland, where he was deputy superintendent. Superintendent Joseph assembled a team of individuals from across the country to assist with his transition into his new position in Nashville. That transition team had four components: student achievement, human resources, choice, and communications. This report is the work of the student achievement portion of the transition process. A list of student achievement committee members is provided in the appendix of this report.

This report is not intended to be an *evaluation or audit* of the school district's efforts to improve student achievement, per se. It does exam many—but not all—elements of the school district's broad efforts around student achievement, and presents its findings and observations in four main areas: academic performance; vision, goals, and leadership; instructional programming; and assessments and accountability. These high-level findings and observations are based on the team's examination of district documents, analysis of data, and interviews with central office and school-based personnel. The report also drew from studies on why some urban school districts improve and others do not. Moreover, the transition group attempted to put the district's work in both a state and national context.

Finally, the report presents the transition team's recommendations for how the district might move forward in its efforts to raise student achievement.

Findings and Observations

What follows are findings and observations from the superintendent's Transition Team on Achievement, and corresponding recommendations and proposals. These findings and observations are based on individual interviews and focus groups that the team conducted; an analysis of district data; and a review of materials provided by the district. The transition team also examined results from the superintendent's "listen and learn" sessions and suggestions from the Mayor's Teacher Cabinet.

Academic Performance

- The number of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals or are English learners has increased by about 7 percent since 2010, according to district staff. The poverty rate in Nashville is about 75 percent, compared with about 58 percent statewide.

- Student achievement in MNPS on standardized state tests in grades 3-8 and 9-12 is below statewide averages (Exhibits 1 and 2). In addition, Tennessee is somewhat below national averages on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), suggesting that Nashville is also below national averages in reading and math. (Nashville does not participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment of NAEP, so a direct determination cannot be made.)

- In general, district TCAP scores in grades 3-8 have been flat in reading over the last several years, while the district reports that there have been gains in mathematics and science. (Exhibit 3)

- End-of-course exam results in grades 9-12 have generally improved over the last several years in English, Algebra, and the sciences (not shown). (Exhibit 4)

- No racial group has shown significant progress in reading attainment over the last several years (Exhibit 5), but all groups have shown some gains in math, according to district staff (Exhibit 6). There have been no major reductions in achievement gaps.

- Disadvantaged students in MNPS have shown little progress in reading over the last several years, but they have shown modest increases in math performance, according to the district. (Exhibit 7)

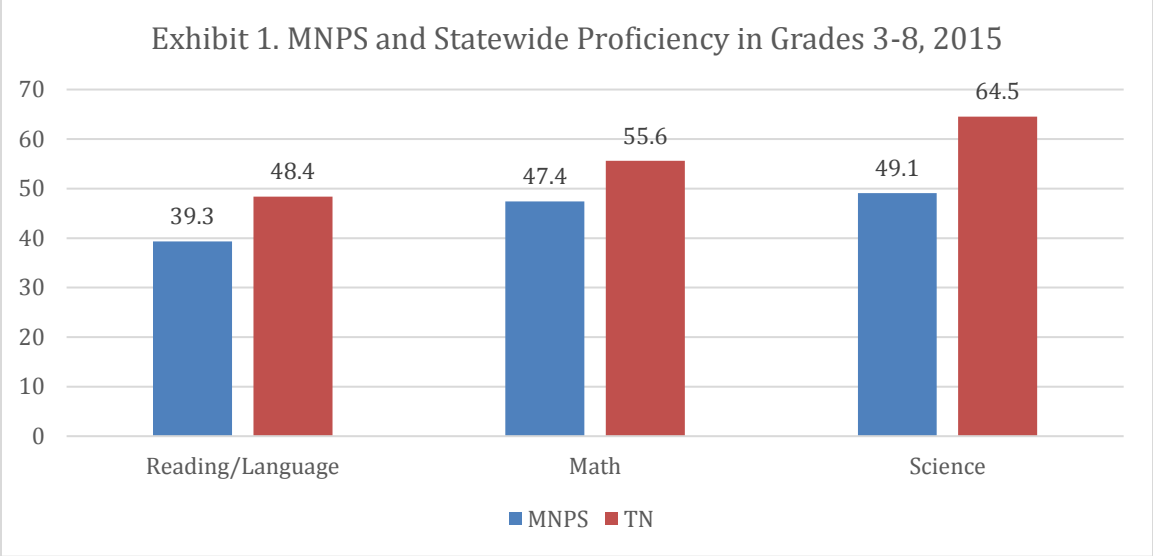
- The district reports no significant academic improvement over the last several years in either reading or math among students with disabilities. (Exhibit 8)

- Overall, there have been some reading gains among former ELLs at the elementary level, but no evidence of improvement on summative exams among those still receiving services, particularly in grades 5 and up. (Exhibit 9)

- Academic improvements are uneven from school to school.

- Student graduation rates have shown improvement since 2011, according to the district. Improvements were generally evident across most student groups, except for students with disabilities (not shown).The current rate (82 percent) is about the same as the national average (Exhibit 10). And the Nashville rate is higher than many other major urban school districts. (Exhibit A-12)

- Because of multiple changes in the state math test—but not the reading test—over the last several years, it is not entirely clear that the math gains in the district are real or simply an artifact of changes in the state math assessment. (Exhibit 11)



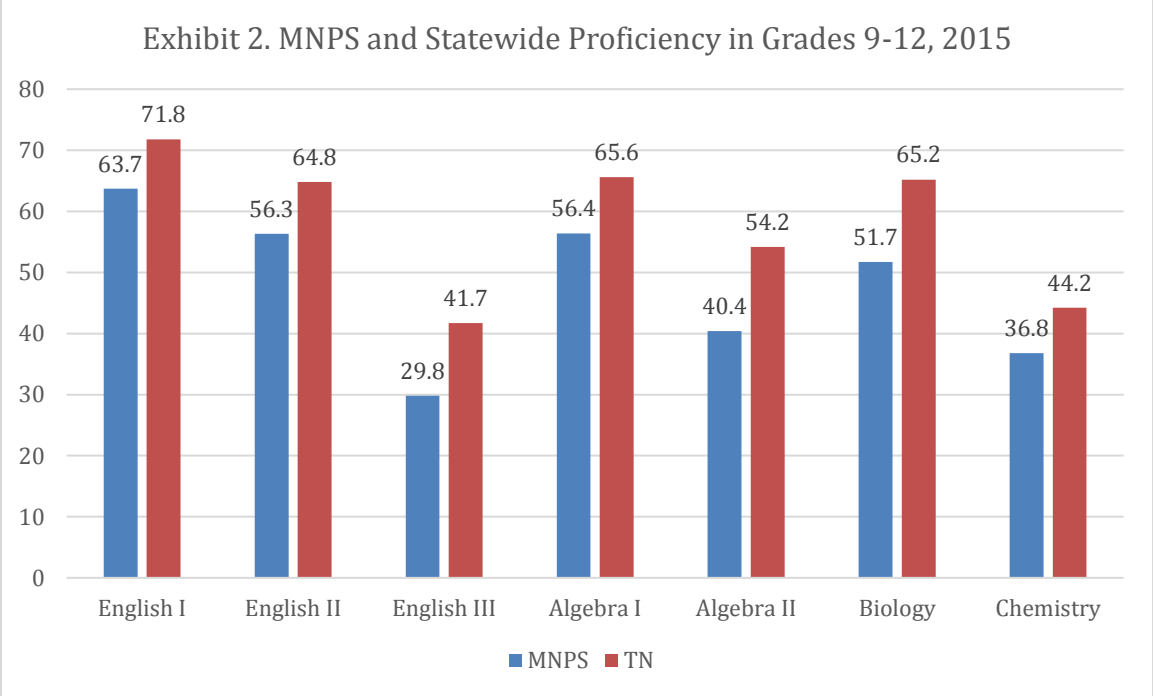


Exhibit 3. TCAP Proficiency of MNPS Students in Grades 3-8

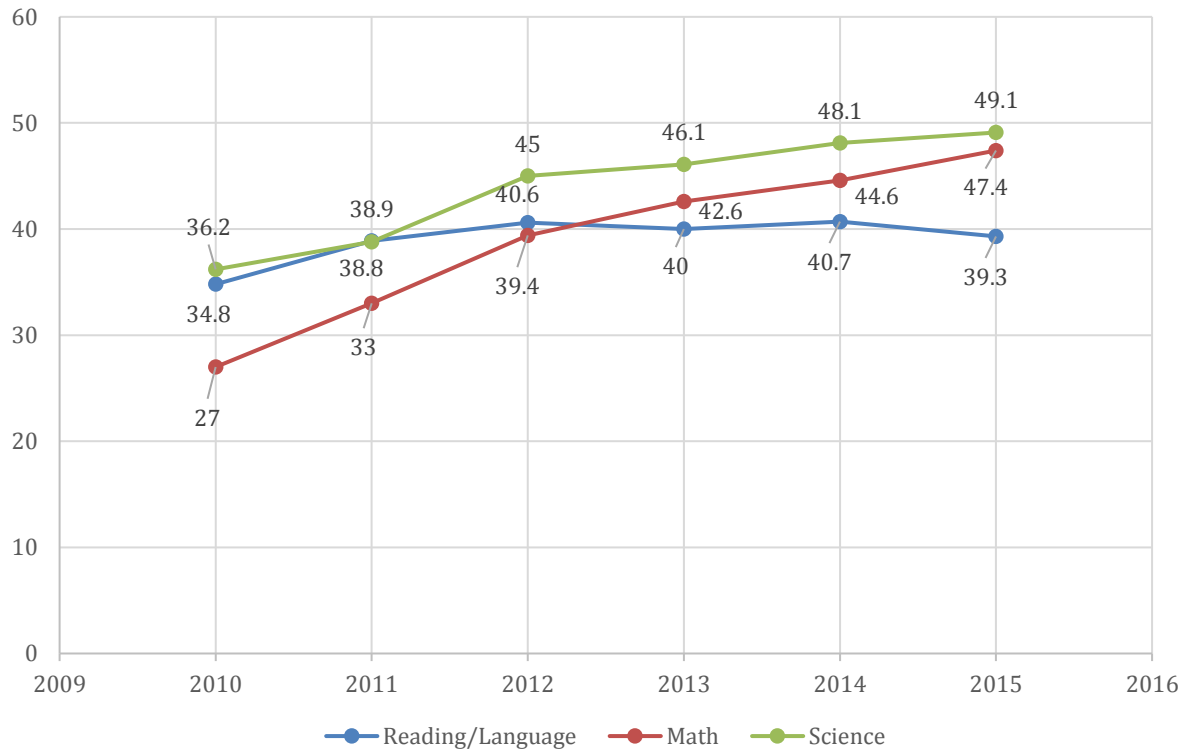
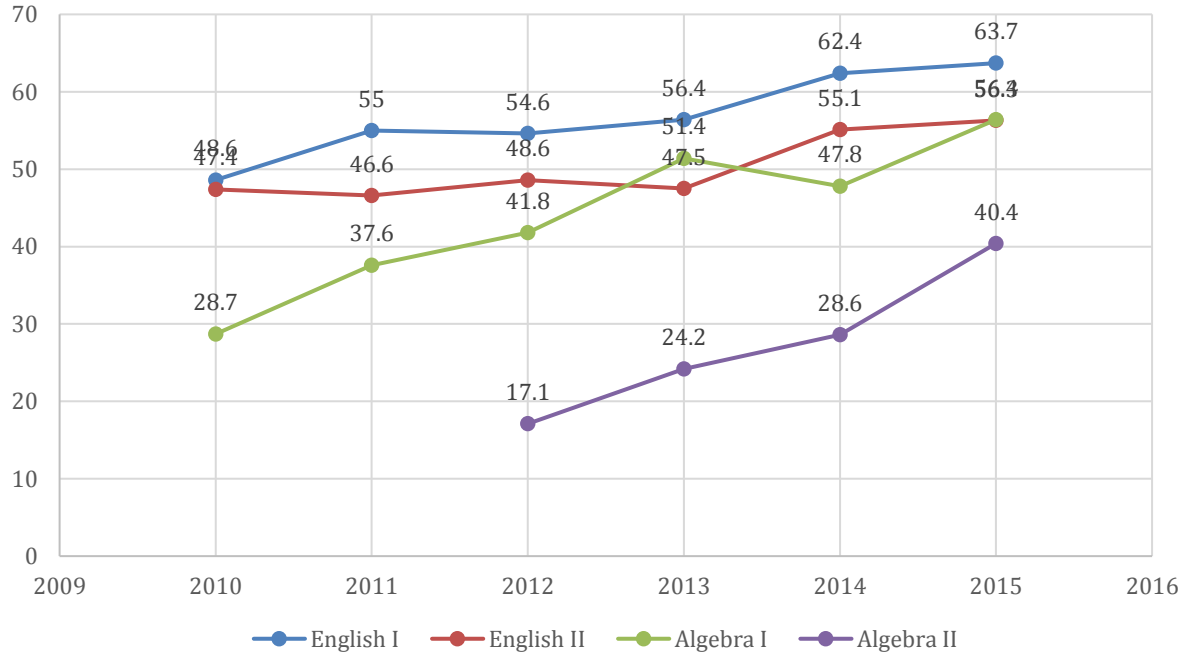


Exhibit 4. End-of-Course Proficiency of MNPS Students in Grades 9-12



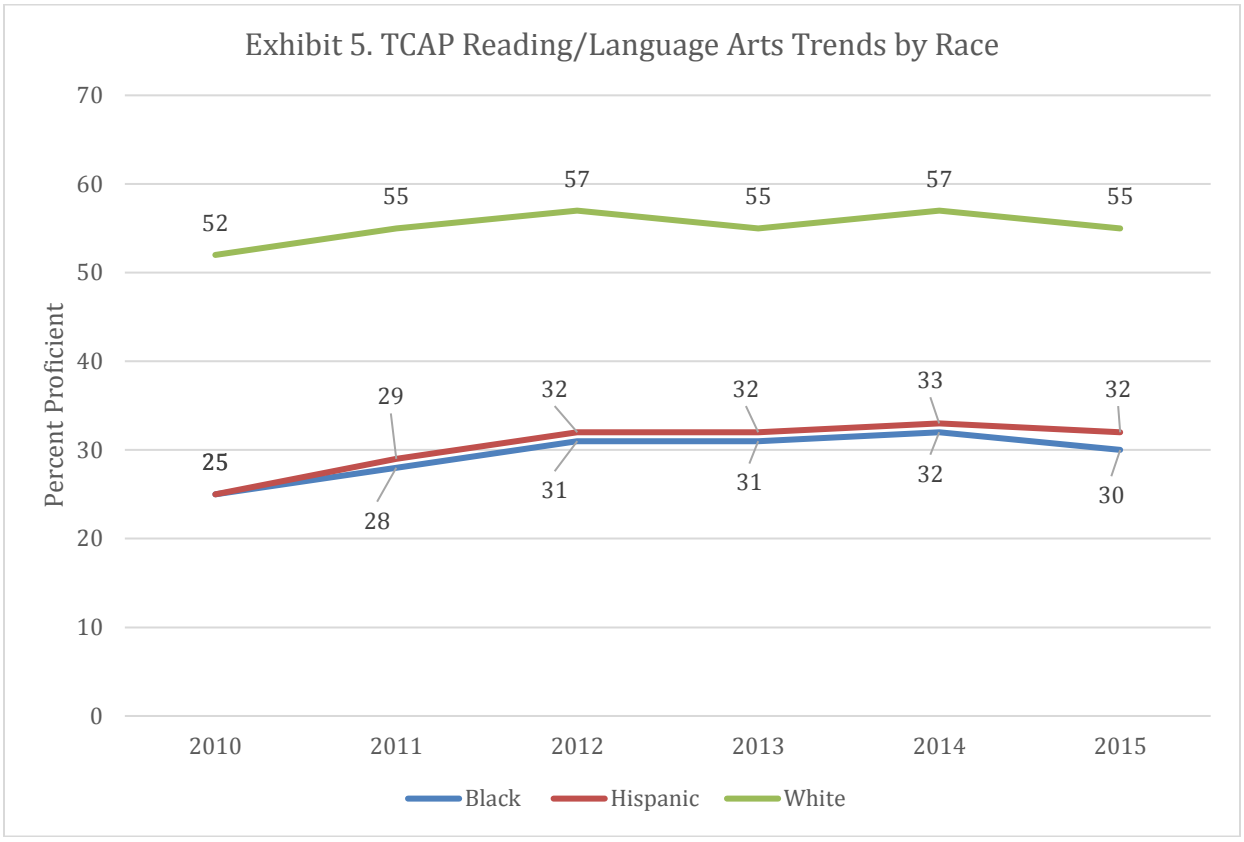


Exhibit 5. TCAP Reading/Language Arts Trends by Race
Percent Proficient
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
52
55
57
55
57
55
25
29
32
32
33
32
28
31
31
32
30
Black
Hispanic
White

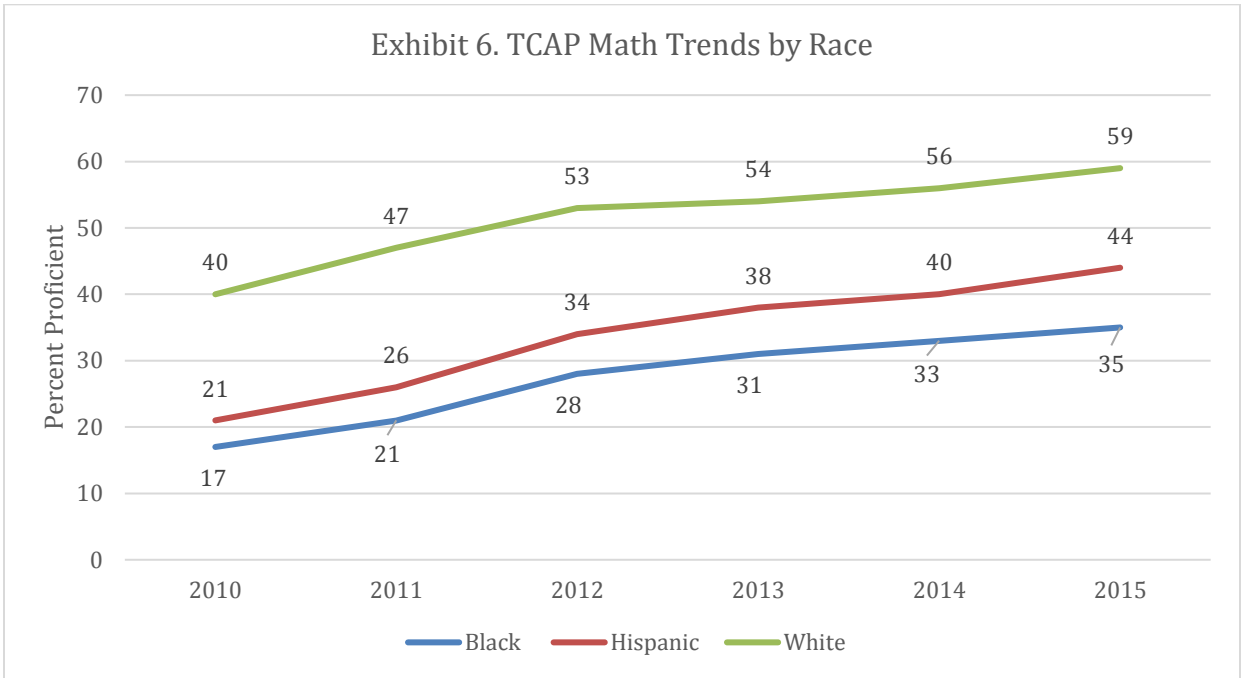


Exhibit 6. TCAP Math Trends by Race
Percent Proficient
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
40
47
53
54
56
59
21
26
34
38
40
44
17
21
28
31
33
35
Black
Hispanic
White

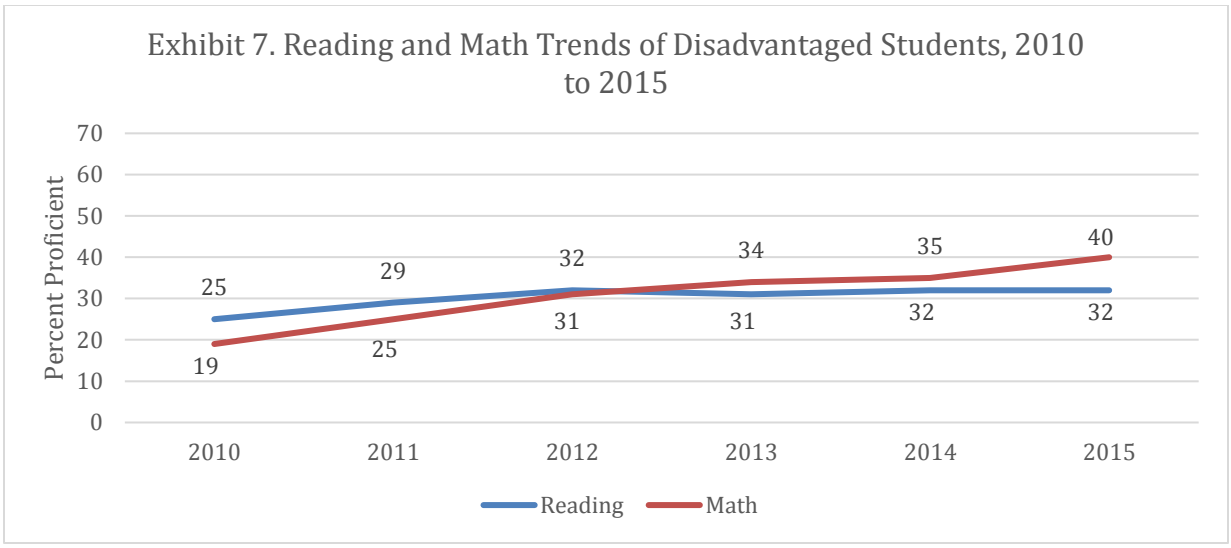


Exhibit 7. Reading and Math Trends of Disadvantaged Students, 2010 to 2015
Percent Proficient
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
25
29
32
34
35
40
19
25
31
31
32
32
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
Reading
Math

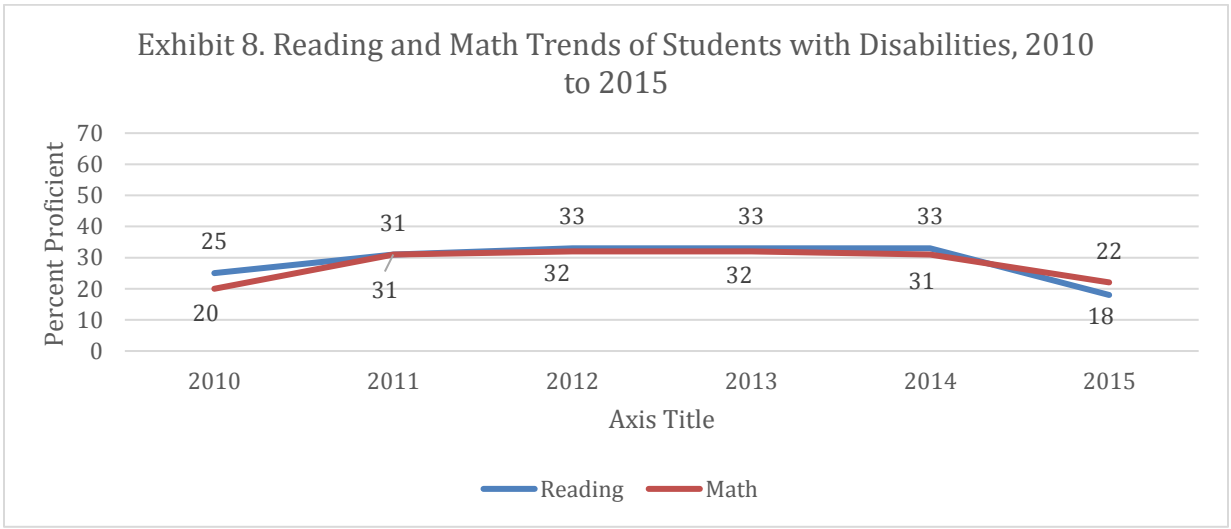


Exhibit 8. Reading and Math Trends of Students with Disabilities, 2010 to 2015
Percent Proficient
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
25
31
33
33
33
22
20
31
32
32
31
18
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
Axis Title
Reading
Math

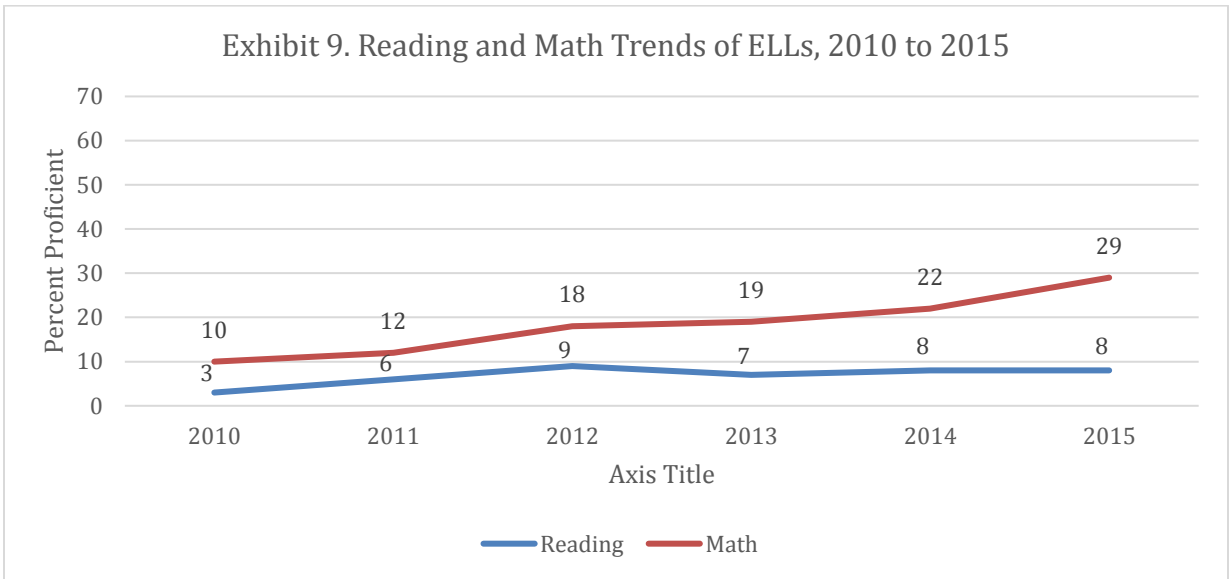


Exhibit 9. Reading and Math Trends of ELLs, 2010 to 2015
Percent Proficient
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
10
12
18
19
22
29
3
6
9
7
8
8
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
Axis Title
Reading
Math

Exhibit 10. Graduation Rate by Student Characteristics, 2015

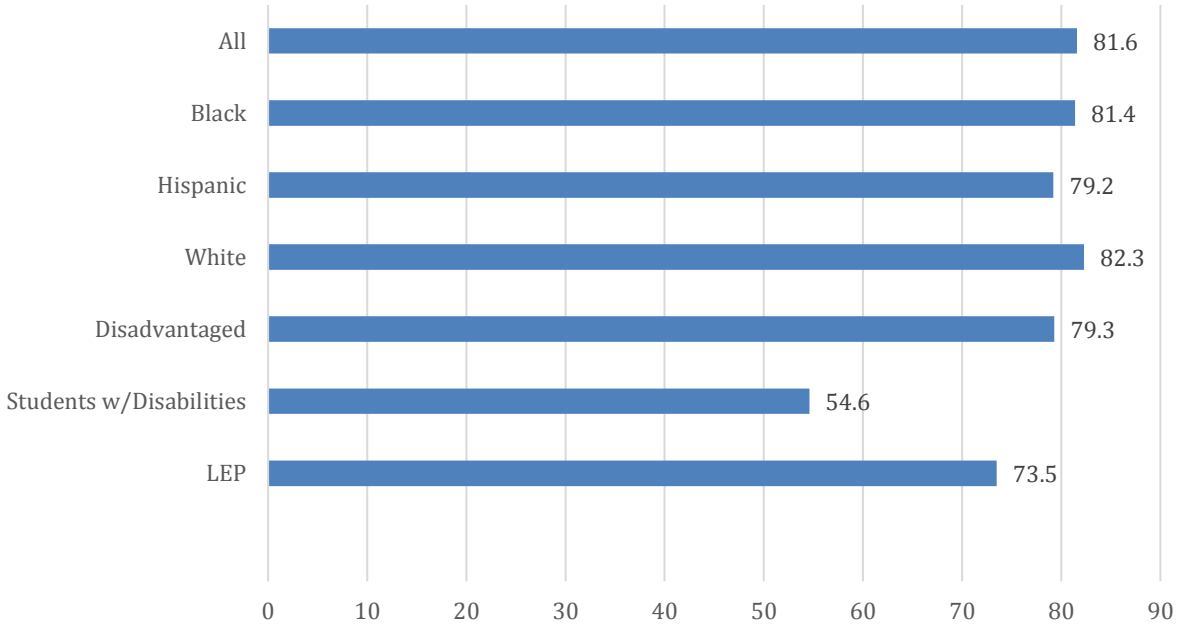
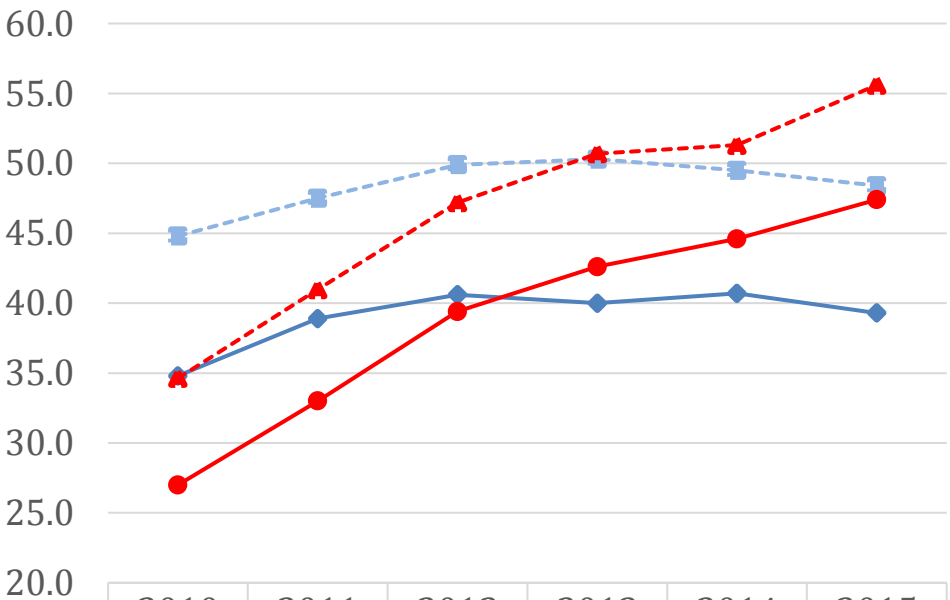


Exhibit 11. Nashville and State TCAP trends for Grades 3-8



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
District RLA	34.8	38.9	40.6	40.0	40.7	39.3
State RLA	44.8	47.5	49.9	50.3	49.5	48.4
District Math	27.0	33.0	39.4	42.6	44.6	47.4
State Math	34.6	41.0	47.2	50.7	51.3	55.6

- The percent of district *third* graders who were absent for 20 or more days was 5 percent in 2015. Absenteeism for this length of time in other city school systems across the country ranged from 1 percent to 21 percent (Exhibit A-2). The percent of district *sixth* graders who were absent for 20 or more days was 7 percent in 2015. Absenteeism for this length of time in other city school systems ranged from 1 percent to 23 percent (Exhibit A-3). The percent of district *ninth* graders who were absent for 20 or more days was 18 percent in 2015. Absenteeism for this length of time in other city school systems ranged from 1 percent to 53 percent (Exhibit A-4).

- The rate of instructional days missed due to suspensions in Nashville was 46 days for every 100 students. This is the equivalent of an average of 0.5 instructional days from suspensions that year. The rate in other major cities across the country ranged from 5.8 days per 100 students to 146.3 days per 100 students. (Exhibit A-5)

- Some 80 percent of students in Nashville had successfully completed Algebra I or an integrated math I course by the end of ninth grade. The percent in other major cities across the country ranged from 48 percent to 92 percent. (Exhibit A-6)

- Some 33 percent of Nashville ninth graders failed one or more core courses in 2015. The percentages in other major cities range from 11 percent to 59 percent. (Exhibit A-7)

- The ninth grade Algebra I completion rate in Nashville was perfectly predictive of its four-year high school graduation rate. In other words, graduation rate was the same as what might be predicted based on ninth grade Algebra completion rates. (Exhibit A-8)

- Some 17.7 percent of eligible students in Nashville took one or more Advanced Placement courses in 2015. The percentages ranged from 8.3 percent to 44 percent in other major cities across the country. (Exhibit A-9)

- Some 46 percent of Nashville students taking an Advanced Placement test scored a 3 or higher. The percent in other major city school systems ranged from 7.6 percent to 70.5 percent. (Exhibit A-10)

- The ACT composite scores for Nashville students were somewhat below what would have been predicted based on the district's free and reduced price lunch rate in 2010 (the most recent year that ACT scores were available on all major city school systems) (Exhibit A-11). The average composite score in Nashville was 18.1 in 2010 and 18.4 in 2016. Scores in 2016 dipped slightly from those in 2015, but the number of test-takers rose from 3,790 in 2015 to 4,300 in 2016. Only about 11 percent of test takers were determined to be college or career ready, according to ACT standards. (Scores by subject: English, 17.6; Math, 17.8; Reading, 18.6; Science 18.3; Overall Composite, 18.4).

Instructional Vision and Leadership

- The Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools enjoys very strong public support and has numerous partnerships with all corners of the community—although there does not appear to be anyone in the district who coordinates these partnerships or ensures that their work aligns with district priorities.

- There is a considerable number of very talented and committed educators in the Nashville public schools.

- Results of the new superintendent's "listen and learn" session demonstrated a strong public interest in and concern about the quality of the district's academic program and the level of student achievement.

- The district's Academic Performance Framework (APF) lays out a helpful structure for defining and tracking academic progress, college and career readiness, achievement gaps, and data on school culture. Data are available at both the district and individual school levels.[1]

- A review of school board minutes and video of recent school board meetings indicates that the board does not devote much time to or give significant attention to student achievement.

- The school board's calendar of meetings is not built around the monitoring of progress on the district's academic goals. Moreover, the board does not use specific pre-determined indicators to regularly gauge progress on student achievement. Instead, board meetings devote disproportionate amounts of time to program presentations, charter schools, and procedural issues.

- There does not seem to be a shared, districtwide instructional vision for how to improve student achievement or what high quality instruction should look like. In other words, there does not appear to be an overarching strategy for boosting student outcomes. Moreover, there does not seem to be a shared sense of responsibility for student outcomes; schools and staff are often seen as acting independently and with little districtwide collaboration.

- The district's overall theory of action is built around school autonomy and individual professionalism, but there is not a clearly defined districtwide instructional direction or strategy to leverage that autonomy on behalf of greater student performance. Instead, the district's instructional program is fractured, incoherent, and directionless. There is a considerable number of district programs and initiatives, but they generally lack focus and a clear connection to school

[1] The APF was developed as a way to combine various student, teacher, and parent data into a single school performance measure. The purpose is to support student achievement, support accountability, provide common metrics, inform—but not determine—decision-making, and provide transparency.

improvement planning, district priorities, or the principals' ability to implement or monitor them.

- The transition team heard from interviewees multiple times that the reason student achievement had not improved faster was because of the numbers of poor and ELL students in the schools. These assertions suggested to the transition team that the district harbors low expectations for student achievement—and an instructional vision that is not inclusive.

Goals

- The district's academic goals are generally well-crafted and specific, but they do not appear to guide the instructional work of the district.

- The district's goals documents have target data for each objective but no actual data.

- Individual schools also have specific academic targets—including subgroup targets and performance levels—outlined in their school improvement plans, although little actual planning for how to improve current student achievement.

Organization and Staffing

- The district's organizational structure has four direct line reports to the superintendent: the chief academic officer, the chief operating officer, the chief of schools, and the chief of staff. Under the chief of staff are the communications, government relations, and research functions. Under the new CAO, Monique Felder, are the following direct reports: curriculum and instruction (K-12 Instruction), student support services, early learning, exceptional education, equity and diversity, professional development, learning technology and library services, academies and CTE, and federal programs. (Appendix B)

- There are large spans of control under both the CAO (9 direct reports) and the Executive Director of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction (9 direct reports).

- Job titles in various instructional units are inconsistent at parallel levels in the organization. For instance, coordinators and managers are on the same level in the academies and CTE unit; managers, supervisors, specialists, and directors are all on the same level in the libraries and technology unit; coordinators are on differing levels in the K-12 unit; and supervisors, coordinators, and directors and executive directors are on the same level in the ELL unit.

- Each unit in the department is typically three to four levels deep without much clarity that each level adds value to unit operations. For instance, coordinators report to other coordinators in the early childhood unit.

- Many of the departments are organized around programs rather than functions.

- The team also benchmarked the staffing levels under the chief academic officer with the instructional units of several other major urban school districts in the Council of the Great City Schools. The table below compares the staffing numbers under the CAO in Nashville to two other similarly-sized urban school districts.

Exhibit 10. Staffing Levels in the Academic Departments of Nashville and Selected Other Cities

Unit	Nashville	Orlando	Charlotte
Curriculum & Instruction	45[2]	35	56
Student Services	76[3]	15	46
Early Learning	14[4]	3	48
Special Education	315[5]	526	279
Technology & Library Services	20	9	9
Academies & CTE	5	11	28
English Learners	137[6]	38	40
Federal Programs	33	10	0[7]
School Supervision	0	0	0
After-school Enrichment	--	--	12

- There appears to be considerable unevenness in the quality and expertise of the district's central office instructional staff, although the team did not question any of them in depth.

- Staff interviewed by the transition team reported considerable siloing and a lack of cross-functional coordination within the teaching and learning division. One transition team member described day-to-day operations as a particularly bad game of "telephone."

- Finally, the team benchmarked major categories of staff in Nashville against staffing levels in other major urban school districts in the Council of the Great City Schools.

[2] Including coaches
[3] Including 18 Community Achieves Specialists
[4] Including 8 family and community engagement staff members
[5] Including 8 high school coaches, 5 autism team leaders, 7 elementary coaches, 8 homebound teachers, 7 middle school coaches, 66.5 psychologists, 14 itinerant early childhood teachers, 35 hearing staff members, 33.5 OT/PT staff members, and 104 SLP staff and contractors.
[6] Including 6 ISRC registrars, 10 EL assessors, 8 district translation specialists, 57 parent outreach translators, 10 elementary school ELD coaches, and 26 EL itinerant teachers.
[7] 504 and McKinney Vento supervised by Student Services and Title I supervised by Student Services.

The results indicated that the district had about the same student-to-staff, student-to-teacher, and student-to-total-administrator ratios as other major urban school systems. However, the district had fewer district-level administrators and more school-based administrators than other major urban school systems (Appendix C).

Funding

- According to Tennessee Department of Education State Report Card, the district's average per pupil expenditure is $11,496.[8] (The amount includes all federal and grant funds, food service funds, and "state administrative aid," i.e., the pro-rata share of the state education budget, in the numerator and ADA—not ADM—as the denominator.)

- The school district tends to invest more funds in the poorest and lowest performing schools, according to the McConnell, Jones, Lanier, and Murphy report.

- About 72 percent of all general purpose dollars are spent for instruction, according to the McConnell audit documents—somewhat higher than what other major urban school systems spend.

- Principals have considerable discretion over their budgets compared with principals in many other school systems. This is consistent with the district's overall site-based theory of action.

Instructional Programming—Tools and Strategies

Scope and Sequence, and Other

- The district does not have a formal systemwide curriculum, but it does have detailed and recently revised scope and sequence documents. However, the scope and sequence documents are not always clear about what teachers are supposed to teach and at what level of depth. It is also clear that the scope and sequence is not uniformly followed. (Issues about the scope and sequence documents were identified both by the transition team and members of the Mayor's Teachers Cabinet.)

- The scope and sequence and year-at-a-glance documents use a common template, which is generally a good thing. Key features included a description of each unit's focus, connections to previous learning, where learning goes next, content standards addressed in the unit, and learning targets. In addition, the template for mathematics includes relatively well-developed "enduring understandings," while science includes guiding questions and learning targets.

[8] An audit by McConnell, Jones, Lanier, and Murphy in 2015 indicated that the per pupil expenditure was $14,700, but the amount included both capital funds and debt service, which are typically not considered allocable to students.

- While there are instructional notes in the scope and sequence documents, there is little guidance for teachers on the content, pedagogy, scaffolding, and assessment of student learning. In addition, the district has not clearly articulated what classroom instruction needs to look like to align with state standards.

- In ELA, the enduring understandings are not built around concepts or themes that would anchor or elevate learning across a group of standards—rather they are presented one standard at a time.

- The ELA documents for grade three indicate that enduring understandings will be forthcoming in 2017-18, but content learning (knowledge, concepts, and skills) should have been described already. In grade seven there are enduring understandings, but they are simply a list of activities and statements about what students will do during the unit, with no articulation of or connections to the knowledge that students will acquire by the end of the unit.

- The ELA scope and sequence document in grade seven includes learning targets or "I can" statements that are written at a lower level of cognitive demand than should be the case. For example, for the standard that calls for students to cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, the "I can" statement was, *"I can identify and distinguish between explicit textual evidence and inference."* This statement does not articulate the level of rigor or depth of understanding that is expected for the standard.

- The district's "Directions for Navigating the 'Education 2018 Goals-Strategies-Objectives Dashboard'" document contains large numbers of transactional or process-oriented activities that are not likely to improve student achievement. For example, under "Quality Teaching (Strategy 1 for exceptional education), A1.2 Objective: Continuously increase the rigor and relevance of learning content and experiences for every learner," the action steps include: "increase students participating in work-based learning; increase percentage of students in academies and tie to transition plans, clarify metrics on how to capture successful transition" and other activities that do not speak to the objective of increasing rigor or depth of understanding.

- The district's balanced literacy framework, Section 4, Time for Literacy, indicates that a school should "ensure 120 minutes of daily systemic, explicit, and rigorous literacy instruction is employed: shared reading, interactive read aloud, writing, word-study, guided reading, and literacy centers"—but it is not clear what these activities are guided by, how they could be pursued, and by using what reading material. In the leadership section, the document indicates that literacy instruction should be linked "in meaningful and appropriate ways," but it does not hint at what those are. In the instruction section, the document calls for providing "extended time for literacy across the curriculum"—but it does not indicate how this might be done. The document goes on to encourage use of "student-centered instruction" without clarifying what this means. In general, the document is vague

and lacks the instructional support or guidance that might be helpful to teachers. It also lacks any reference to the use of text-dependent questions or the appropriate balance between grade-level and leveled texts. The document's descriptions of anchor lessons, however, are good.

- These instructional documents and the professional development behind them may inadvertently be encouraging the use of leveled readers in a way that is dampening students' access to more complex texts and better student reading skills. In other words, students may be progressing well toward greater reading fluency but then plateau for lack of exposure to more advanced academic vocabulary and complex text.

- The district uses Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt's *Journeys* program for reading in the elementary grades, but the transition team heard that schools and individual teachers sometimes did not use it.

- Individual schools have considerable latitude to acquire materials and texts other than those the district provides, but the district has not provided any guidelines or criteria grounded in the state's standards about what schools should be looking for in purchasing their materials or what is aligned or not aligned.

- The district does not have a clear strategy for how to integrate literacy development or English language development into math, science, or social studies instruction across grades. Nor does the district appear to have an overarching language-development strategy for struggling readers of all kinds, i.e., ELLs, poor students, or students with weak exposure to rich language.

- The scope and sequence documents include suggested resources, but there is no rationale for how and when the resources should be used during instruction.

    - In ELA, it is specified that the texts are suggestions only under the instructional resources section and that "teachers should choose texts that meet the interest and needs of their students," which could either invite the use of leveled-texts in the classroom or suggest that texts that are not aligned with the standards can be selected.

    - In mathematics, number-lines are recommended for use during the first unit. However, no guidance is provided that would allow teachers to know and understand how to make number-lines actionable in the classroom.

- In mathematics, the enduring understandings articulate the knowledge that students will acquire during the unit, but there are no explicit connections made across multiple standards—coherence—or any mechanism by which students would demonstrate their understanding other than standardized tests.

- The scope and sequence in math has unpacked the standards using progression documents that provide some guidance to teachers about what to teach in ways that the literacy documents do not.

- The math office has been providing focused professional development around linking or aligning practices to the content, e.g., "number talks" that help teachers develop student understanding of place value in the early grades.

- Programmatically, the district places strong emphasis on blended learning, project-based learning (PBL), balanced literacy, Reading Recovery, and career academies. However, the research on the academic efficacy of blended learning and PBL is mixed, and the effectiveness of balanced literacy typically depends on how it is implemented. (There was suspicion, however, by some transition team members that the combination of PBL, blended learning, and test prep was squeezing standards-based content out of classroom instruction and making it harder to improve academic attainment.) Career academies were credited by some interviewees as having helped improve the district's graduation rate.

- The district has had an extensive set of academies for about 10 years where students have the opportunity to earn college credit and/or a nationally recognized industry certification. In 2016, 206 students earned certifications and 604 earned early college credit. Over 350 community partners participate.

- The district does not appear to have a standard or well-articulated set of criteria for when instructional interventions are used and under what circumstances. In addition, the norms for when students move into Tier II instruction may have changed recently or are differentially applied.

- In general, the district is just starting to think about employing an MTSS or RTI system for its elementary and middle schools. Currently, these models are used only in some schools at their discretion. A better-defined, districtwide MTSS system—in both academic and behavioral areas—could provide the district with a more cohesive framework for integrating stronger academic achievement with social and emotional learning.

- The district uses a number of walk-through protocols: A classroom walkthrough from the division of teaching and learning; a CTE coaching and observation tool developed by the Tennessee Department of Education; and an instructional rounds observation tool to provide feedback on a problem of practice. There are other monitoring tools used by the district that relate to autism spectrum disorders, learning technology, math concepts (very low level), school monitoring, school climate, support services, Wilson Reading, federal programs, and others. In general, the classroom walkthroughs for teaching and learning were too generic to provide actionable feedback to teachers on how to enhance student understanding of what is being taught. For example, having a word wall does not mean that students know how to use words appropriately or can retrieve them during academic discussions, yet that is what the walkthrough protocol instructs observers to look for. Grouping is another look-for, but there is no guidance on how to discern whether this is the most effective technique given the particular lesson under observation. Furthermore, the walkthrough looks for "use of content vocabulary," but does not indicate whether it is the teacher or the students who

should be using the academic language. There was also little in the walkthrough forms or procedures that would inform a teacher, principal, or administrator about the level or depth of work being done by students—although there was an item about whether student work is displayed. Finally, the form uses checks to determine student learning and engagement, but the form does not provide guidance on how this is to be assessed, whether it applies to all students, or what the nature of the engagement is.

- The district's partnership with its public library system—Limitless Libraries—provides a public library card to each MNPS student and is considered a national model.

Professional Development

- The district's professional development opportunities are menu-driven. Course offerings do not appear to be fully aligned with the district's academic priorities, instructional needs, or student weaknesses. Teachers and others are able to choose their own professional development from district catalogues.

- The district has relied on a train-the-trainer model of professional development that has not proven to be wholly effective.

- Attendance at district professional development is optional. The district does not appear to regularly track teacher participation or attendance at professional development sessions.

- The district's professional development does not appear to be differentiated by teacher expertise, experience, or previous professional development, and there is no mechanism to steer teachers toward the professional development they need most. Teachers interviewed by the transition team reported considerable redundancy in the professional development offered by the district and a lack of flexibility in when and how professional development could be received.

- Schools may request certain sections of the professional development for their own personnel but not others.

- The district's professional development catalogue sometimes indicates who is teaching a specified course offering, but many times it does not. (Trainers in special education are listed.) There is little clarity in the qualifications of those teaching or leading various professional development offerings.

- There does not appear to be routine evaluation of how well professional development is implemented or what the effects of professional development are on student achievement.

- The central office does not have a robust teacher recruitment program or a set of career ladders for its teachers. Most recruiting and hiring seems to go through individual school principals.

- The district's mechanism for evaluating teachers does not effectively distinguish between highly effective and lesser effective teachers.

- The district lacks a regular process by which more effective schools and teachers are able to share best practices. The transition team was also not able to identify whether the district had attempted to identify why some schools improve faster than others.

School Improvement Plans and Federal Programming

- District schools use the state's ePlan Grants Management System to enter their school improvement plans. Each school's first submission is on September 30. They are reviewed for compliance by school improvement program facilitators and returned with feedback. School plans are then approved no later than December 1.

- Sample school improvement plans provided by the district were uneven in terms of quality.[9] Some plans were quite good and very specific, and most plans summarized their test score data adequately. Other plans did not have any description of what the school was actually planning to do to further improve academic achievement, although many had descriptions of what they had done. Few plans had any description of the school's pedagogy, instructional approach, strategy for reducing achievement gaps, tutoring, or their tiered instruction. Several mentioned preparing for the Tennessee state tests. A small number of plans also did not list a parent representative in the planning process. (One plan actually indicated that students were behind and that increased standards made the situation worse.)

- The federal program office signs off on school improvement plans along with lead principals. The federal program's office is also responsible for program compliance and civil rights reporting, and is one of the larger offices underneath the CAO.

- The federal program office has a substantial portfolio of formula and discretionary grant programs. Like other departments in the school system, the federal program's unit lacks clear alignment with district priorities. Its leadership agrees that there is not a clear process by which decisions are made about what to apply for and what not to apply for—or how to determine whether the applications align to district goals. For instance, the district applied for a major pre-k grant even though early childhood was not a clear priority of the district in its strategic plan.

[9] The district provides school improvement plans for Head Middle School, East Nashville School, Martin Luther King School, Intrepid College Preparatory Charter School, Pearl-Cohn High School, Smithson Craighead Academy Charter School, and Lockeland Elementary School.

- The district does not have anyone identified as its primary fundraiser. External fundraising appears to have been out-sourced to the local Public Education Fund. There are also no annual or long-term fundraising targets.

Principals

- Principals reported to the transition team that they went through a rigorous process when they were hired, including a written application, interviews, and role-playing.

- The district's new leadership has added new lead principals, substantially lowering their span of control. Principals reported feeling much better supported this school year than in previous years.

- The district's new chief of schools is also working to normalize or standardize the work of lead principals—a good thing—rather than having their work differ so much from person to person.

- Principals reported to the transition team that they have received very little explicit guidance or support over the years on how to improve student achievement. There is no clear mechanism in the district by which the instructional capacity of school principals is enhanced or strengthened.

- Principals reported to the transition team that they had very uneven induction experiences. Some reported an onboarding process that provided substantial support, but many indicated that they received little backing when they were first appointed to the principalship or when they were moved to another school.

- Principals indicated that they had some input into the evaluations of coaches but would like to have more. They also indicated that the hiring and placement of coaches through the central office was often slow.

- The quality of the district's instructional coaches was reported to the transition team to be very uneven. Coaches report up through various departments of the school system and receive inconsistent levels of training. In addition, there does not appear to be a routine way for principals to follow up on the coaching their teachers receive.

Teachers

- Teachers interviewed as a group by the transition team reported that their on-boarding experiences were uneven and sometimes non-existent.

- Teachers reported receiving weak instructional guidance on what to teach. They reported strong emphasis on procedures and activities but not on content.

- Teachers are unclear about when and how to use various intervention materials with students who are slipping behind academically.

- Teachers reported uneven experiences with their instructional coaches, and indicated that they had no role in evaluating them—but would like to.

- The teachers interviewed by the transition team generally gave low marks to the district's scope and sequence documents, benchmark tests, and professional development offerings. On a scale of one (lowest) to five (highest), most interviewees gave all three instructional tools a one or a two.

- Teachers indicated that there was not a district mechanism by which they were able to provide feedback to the central office on what worked and what didn't.

- Teachers reported little guidance from the central office about how to integrate reading and math standards across content areas.

- Teachers also reported that school counselors were often pulled off of their regular duties in support of students to handle test administration and other responsibilities.

English Language Learners

- There are approximately 13,500 ELLS in the district or about 17.0 percent of the district's enrollment. The district has about 26,000 students who speak a first language other than English and have tested proficient on the Tennessee English Language Placement Assessment (TELPA).

- The district appears to have made some progress over the last several years in developing a more coherent instructional program for ELLs and some schools with significant numbers of ELLs have made academic progress.

- Ten of the district's 154 schools had ELLs that accounted for 6,129 ELLs. ELLs comprised over 50 percent of the enrollment in these schools. Another 22 schools had enrollments of between 25 and 50 percent ELLs and their total ELL population was 4,740 students. In other words, 32 schools in the district accounted for about 80 percent of all ELLs. Another 122 schools accounted for 2,786 ELLs. And some 110 schools had fewer than 50 ELLs each.

- None of the district's five "Reward—Performance" schools had significant numbers of ELLs; although some of the district's eight "Reward—Progress" schools, which have small numbers of ELLs, made academic progress. For instance, Apollo Middle School, which is 22.7 percent ELL, was a fairly large "Reward—Progress" school, but it is not clear that the district has looked into the reasons for their progress.

- Nine of the district's 109 "One-Year Success" schools have ELL enrollments of at least 50 percent ELLs: Tusculum, Glenview, Haywood, Glengarry, Binkley, Moss, Glencliff, McMurray, and Cole. These schools should be watched to see if they sustain their progress.

- The district has 13 “Priority Schools” but only two of them have significant numbers of ELLs: Bend and Whitsitt. In addition, three schools are cited as “Focus” schools because of the performance of their ELLs: Tyler, Kennedy, and Hill.

- The district reports that the average student receives language services for 4.1 years, but this counts only those students who have exited the program—not students who are still in a program. The transition team estimates that the average ELL will stay in a language program five to seven years.

- Between 2015 and 2016, the percent of ELLs who achieved English language proficiency on the ACCESS assessment grew from 9.4 percent to 13.6 percent. (The state target is 4.7 percent.)

- The district also operates ELL afterschool programming and tutoring four days a week at 15 school sites along with summer school programming at 10 sites.

- The district also secured $10 million in new grants by which it was able to expand the numbers of ELL teachers, professional development, and after-school programming.

- Outreach by the district’s ELL office to parents and the community appears reasonably strong on paper. The district seems to be making an effort to connect and communicate with parents often and in multiple languages. The district has a large number of interpreters and translators in place, and it hosts a radio program to communicate to parents. However, focus groups conducted by the communications transition team suggested major gaps in outreach.

- The instructional plan for ELLs appears to be disconnected from the general districtwide academic improvement plan.

- The district’s ELL office clearly recognizes that ELLs are not a homogeneous group—e.g., newcomers with differing levels of English proficiency, students with interrupted formal schooling, ELLs with literacy in their home language, etc.—and that differing strategies are required for each.

- In an attempt to address these differences in ELL circumstances, the district lists eight "service models" it uses, but they appear to be instructional services rather than models of ELL instruction. The services are not described in great detail.

- The district has purchased or created a number of resources to support teachers and students. One includes different lesson planning templates (one of which is 15 pages long), but it was not clear how to choose among the templates, or how to determine which template goes with which service or model. The "EL Services" section relies heavily on WIDA documents.

- The district has invested heavily in Imagine Learning and Achieve3000, but the programs do not fully align with the standards the state uses, and one has a limited research base demonstrating effectiveness with ELLs.

- There is no clear instructional pathway that would allow parents of ELLs to understand the expected trajectory of their children in acquiring English and graduating from high school. In fact, the graduation of ELLs does not seem strongly tied to the state's standards or to any other rigorous "finish line."

- It appears that SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) students are in school for almost a year before they start receiving instruction in the content areas. (The district has about 140 SIFE students at six SIFE sites.)

- There is no ELL programming for pre-k students in the district although the city has a substantial number of very young ELLs and has some 188 pre-k classes.

- The district offers a substantial catalog of professional development offerings around the needs of ELLs. In addition, there appears to be at least eight major professional development initiatives, including WIDA, SIOP, Thinking Maps, Academic Conversations, Balanced Literacy, EL Shadowing, Blended Learning (Imagine Learning and Achieve3000), and Blackboard courses. However, it was unclear how these initiatives are prioritized or sequenced; how a teacher is supposed to choose among them; and which ones work best, for what purposes, and why. The documents also do not state whether principals and other key administrative staff are included in these professional development offerings on a regular basis.

- The district has a well thought-out professional development and PLC model with its ELL coaches supporting teachers of ELLs.

- The district's ELL High School Progression Plan is a useful document, but it appears that only "Plan 3" would bring ELLs to grade level. The actual trajectory to graduation for ELLs is unclear. (The district might want to look at *San Diego ELL Graduation Pathways*.)

- Despite reasonably strong parent outreach and a large number of translators, the district's letters to parents do not always clearly explain key ideas. For example, exit letters to parents say that, in order to exit, students "must have an ACCESS overall score and a literacy score of 5.0 - 6.0 on Tier B or C." It does not explain what this means, but instead directs parents who "want to know more" to an all-English WIDA home page.

- District forms to parents seem to jump quickly to an offer for parents to opt their children out of programming—a requirement of federal law. But, the district seems to suggest that students who opt out will not receive core curricular 'services,' which are still required under *Lau*.

Special Education

- The district and its charters serve about 11,000 students with IEPs who are age three through 21, including students in separate schools. This number is about 12.8 percent of the district's enrollment— about what one would expect for a district of this size. There are somewhat sharper differences between the percent of students with disabilities in district-run and charter schools, however. Students with IEPs make up 13.1 percent of students enrolled in district-run schools, and only 10.3 percent of students enrolled in charters (Exhibit D-1).

- There are about 800 children with IEPs in early childhood programs who have one of three major disabilities. The largest category is developmental delays (DD)—39 percent; the second largest is speech/language impairment (SLI)—33 percent; and the third largest is autism—19 percent. (Exhibit D-2)

- MNPS-run schools and charter schools have about the some rates of students with disabilities when one looks at each disability category, except that charters have higher rates of students with a speech language impairment and other health impairments (OHI). District-run schools have somewhat higher rates in the areas of intellectual disabilities (ID) and other low-incident disabilities. (Exhibit D-3)

- Of all MNPS-run and charter school students with a disability, 27 percent have a specific learning disability (SLD), 21 percent have a speech language (S/L) impairment, 15 percent are OHI, 9 percent have autism, 6 percent have an emotional disability, 7 percent have an intellectual disability, 6 percent are developmentally delayed, and 8 percent are other. This configuration is somewhat different from state and national averages in the areas of SLD, S/L, and OHI. (Exhibit D-4)

- The percentages of students with IEPs in MNPS increase somewhat steadily grade-to-grade from kindergarten (10 percent) through 12th grade. The rates grade-by-grade in charter schools are more uneven. (Exhibit D-5)

- When looking at all students with IEPs in either MNPS-run and charter schools, African American students in both systems are more likely to be identified as having a disability than other races are. The risk for African American students is somewhat higher in charter schools than in district-run schools. (Exhibit D-6)

- African American students in both MNPS and charter-run schools are much more likely than students of other races to be identified as having an emotional disturbance. (Exhibit D-7)

- The risk of an ELL having an IEP is higher in charter schools than in MNPS schools. Some 10.9 percent of all ELLs in MNPS have an IEP, compared with 13.5 percent of all non-ELLs. This pattern is reversed in charter schools where 12.8 percent of all ELLs have an IEP, compared with 9.9 percent of non-ELLs. (Exhibit D-8)

- ELLs in charter schools have the highest risk of having an IEP because of a specific learning disability, followed by autism and speech/language impairment.[10] ELLs in MNPS-run schools are about as likely as students who are not ELLs to be identified as having a speech/language impairment, intellectual disability, learning disability, or other disability. In general, ELLs in district-run schools have lower risks than those in charters of being identified as having a disability in every disability area. (Exhibit D-9)

- Students with IEPs are equally likely to be economically disadvantaged in district-run schools as in charter schools. There is some variation between the two types of schools, however, when one looks at the data by grade. Discrepancies are largest in grades one through four. (Exhibit 10)

- While the rates of poor students with disabilities are about the same in district-run and charter schools, they vary somewhat when looking at disability categories. For students with autism and emotional disability, the rates are higher in district-run schools. The opposite is true for students with intellectual disabilities where the percentage is higher in charters. (Exhibit D-11)

- Some 2,675 students were referred for and completed an initial evaluation for special education instruction and related services in 2015-16. Of this number, 2,048 students (76.6 percent) were found to have a disability and required an IEP. Of all students found eligible, 34 percent were SLI, 17.3 percent were SLD, 16.6 percent were developmentally delayed (DD), 12.9 percent were OHI, and 7.6 percent were on the autism spectrum. (Exhibit D-12)

- The state of Tennessee assesses achievement of young children with IEPs in three areas: appropriate behavior, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and positive social/emotional skills. In each area, calculations are made on (1) children who enter an early childhood program below developmental expectations but who have improved developmentally by age six when they leave the program or (2) children who function within expectations by age six or who had attained those expectations when they left the program. The district scores highest in the area of positive social/emotional skills, but the level is still below state targets. The district is closest to state targets in the area of appropriate behavior. (Exhibit D-13)

- In reading/language arts (RLA), math, English and Algebra I, students with disabilities in the district score below similar students statewide. (Exhibit D-14)

- Of all students with IEPs who graduated in 2015, 54.6 percent graduated with a regular diploma. This is about the same rate as in 2011. The general graduation rate among students without IEPs increased from 79.5 percent in 2011 to 85.3 percent in 2015. There was also no change in the graduation rates among students receiving a special diploma. (Exhibit D-15)

[10] A risk ratio was not calculated when a disability area had a number of students less than 10.

- Dropout rates among students without IEPs decreased from 13.5 percent in 2011 to 11.1 percent in 2015. The dropout rate among students with IEPs increased between 2011 and 2014 before dropping somewhat in 2015 to 21.7 percent. (Exhibit D-16)

- A far higher percent (48.3 percent) of district students with IEPs between the ages of three to five receive the majority of their special education services in regular early childhood programs than the state average (26.5 percent)—or the state target (28.5). The district's rate is also above the national rate (43 percent). (Exhibit D-17)

- Some 63.6 percent of district students with IEPs are in regular classes at least 80 percent of the time compared with the statewide average of 70.1 percent, the national average of 61.1 percent, and the state target of 67.5 percent. Conversely, the district serves students with IEPs in less inclusive settings, i.e., regular classroom settings, less than 40 percent of the time (8.7 percent)—a lower rate than the state (10.7 percent), the national average (14.0 percent), and the state target (11.4 percent). (Exhibit 18)

- The district is more likely to educate students with disabilities in the most inclusive settings in the elementary and middle grades than in the high schools. (Exhibit D-19)

- Students with a specific learning disability, other health impairment, developmental delays, or speech/language impairment are most likely to be taught in an inclusive setting in district schools. (Exhibit D-20)

- Students with emotional disturbance, autism, and intellectual disabilities are the most likely to spend most of their time in separate classrooms or separate schools. (Exhibit D-21)

- No racial group is significantly more likely than any other group to be educated in either inclusive or restrictive settings. The highest area of risk applied to African American students, who were 1.54 times as likely to be educated in separate classes most of the time. But this ratio does not meet the threshold of "2" or higher. (Exhibit D-22)

- ELLs and non-ELLs are about equally as likely to be placed in each setting, except that ELLs are very unlikely to be educated in a separate school (0.3 risk ratio). (Exhibit D-23)

- The district did not provide the transition team with data on suspensions of students with disabilities, but the state's performance plan report indicated that the district's suspension of African American students was significantly disproportionate in the 2013-14 school year. A significant disproportionality is defined in Tennessee as a ratio of "2" or higher, but the state report did not indicate the exact figure in Nashville.

- With 680.5 full-time equivalent special educators, the district has an average of 14.9 students with IEPs for every special educator. This ratio is close to the average 14.5 ratio across the 71 districts on which the Council of the Great City Schools maintains data. (Exhibit D-24)

- Compared with other major urban districts, Nashville is about in the middle of the pack in terms of the numbers of related-services personnel the district employs. (Exhibits D-24 and D-25)

Early Childhood

- The district has about 188 pre-k programs located in a variety of school and community sites in every cluster of the community.

- A total of 3,376 pre-k seats are available to students with and without disabilities.

- Enrollment in the district's pre-k programs is only about 32 percent of the size of the district's kindergarten enrollment (Exhibit A-1), suggesting that the district may not be putting sufficient emphasis on early childhood programming. The percentages in other major city school systems range from 94 percent to four percent.

- The district reports that it uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum for instruction, safety, and social/emotional growth. Pre-k coaches are assigned to each program to support teachers.

- The district uses a portfolio assessment three times a year in its pre-k programs called GOLD. The assessment measures student growth in 38 objectives in content, social and emotional growth, and physical growth.

Gifted and Talented

- Central office staff reported to the transition team that there were three ways a child could qualify for the ENCORE program: 1) K-2 students are assessed using the NNAT-2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test), and grade 4-6 students are assessed using CogAT; 2) second graders pass a universal screener; and 3) intellectually gifted students are identified through the school psychologist.

- Administrative staff indicated that somewhere between three and five percent of the district's students are identified as gifted or talented, but they were less sure what the ideal percentage should be. A number of staff indicated that they should have between six and eight percent of students in the program. (A later check of data indicated that the district had about 3,000 students receiving gifted and talented services—approximately three percent of enrollment.)

- Program staff reported that only four ELLs were in the gifted and talented program systemwide, and they were unsure about the number of students with

disabilities who were also identified as gifted, although the estimate was around 100 students. The percentage of African American and Hispanic students in the program were also not proportionate to their numbers in the general enrollment.

- The district offers some form of gifted services in every elementary and middle school with a cadre of itinerant teachers.

- The district's gifted and talented program is funded at only $1.3 million and employs 34 teachers. The district's effort on gifted and talented students seems more like a project than an ongoing concern or priority.

- Program staff indicated that they recommended at least three hours of gifted and talented programming per week for identified students, but that the actual number varied considerably from week to week and school to school. (A later check of documents indicated that K-8 classes meet once each week for between one and three hours, depending on school and grade level.)

- The district offers over 260 distinct academic courses (AP/IB/AICE), an increase of over 40 percent over the past three years. The district offers every available AP course except advanced Italian and Japanese. In addition, some 6,000 AP/IB/AICE exams were given in 2016, an increase of about 17 percent over the last three years.

Student Discipline and Attendance

- Classroom management and student behavior was reported to be a problem by some interviewees, but there is not a systemwide PBIS or restorative justice program. Instead, these programs exist only in the schools that want to implement them. (Organizationally, restorative justice, RTI behavior, SEL, health, and similar programs are housed in the student services unit under the CAO.)

- Principals are trained in the code of conduct but not in behavioral programming. There is no explicit component in principals' evaluations on student behavior.

- Approximately nine percent of students were suspended out of school for between 1 and 5 days in 2014-15, and two percent were suspended between 6 and 10 days that school year. The rate of out-of-school suspensions was unchanged between 2014-15 and 2015-16, but had declined somewhat from 12.7 percent in 2012-13.

- Some 72 percent of out-of-school suspensions in 2015-16 were of African American students.

- About 32 percent of third graders were absent from school in 2014-15 for between 5 and 9 days; an additional 20 percent were absent between 10-19 days; and five percent were absent for 20 or more days. (Comparisons with other major city school districts in third, sixth, and ninth grades are shown in Exhibits A- 2, A-3, and A-4.)

- There appears to be no non-negotiables in how students use school time. Scheduling problems may keep some students who need particular classes from getting them.

Assessments and Accountability

Accountability

- The evaluation procedure for the previous superintendent was not based on pre-determined and agreed-upon indicators of student progress. Instead, the director was evaluated by the board using one to three specific examples or pieces of evidence in three broad categories: educational support, systems transformation, and student success.

- Principals, lead principals, and the chief of schools all reported that it wasn't always clear to principals why they were let go or moved from one school to another.

- Interviewees at the school level reported considerable pressure to improve their "numbers" but indicated that they received little support on how to accomplish that.

- There is no component in the principals' evaluation system that holds them accountable for retaining their best teaching talent.

- The procedures for using walk-through protocols were reported to be unevenly applied. It wasn't always clear what people did with the results or that they provided feedback to school-level staff in a way that informed instructional practice.

- Teacher accountability is based in large measure on student test scores and growth, but the evaluation system does not differentiate well between highly effective teachers and teachers who are not as effective.

- Teachers themselves reported as part of the Mayor's Teacher Cabinet that additional accountability was needed for getting students well-grounded in the earliest grades to ensure a strong foundation for later learning.

Assessments

- The district will not have state summative data on the 2015-16 school year, leaving the system in a place where it cannot adequately evaluate progress or determine accountability for the year.

- The district's benchmark assessments were designed by the district using released items from NWEA's MAP exams that staff members believed were aligned to the state's standards. However, teachers reported to the transition team that they did

not have confidence in the alignment of the tests with the scope and sequence documents, end-of-course exams, or the standards. The tests are given four times a year.

- The transition team heard little evidence from the interviews that either benchmark or summative exam results were used to inform or improve instructional practice. Most interviewees saw assessment results as driving the accountability system, but not improving practice.

- The district's benchmark assessments are administered only in English, according to district staff members.

- Schools sometimes augment required state and local assessments with their own tests, and use these tests to guide their work. The transition team could not find an inventory of all the tests purchased by individual schools.

- There was a perception by many of those interviewed that there was considerable over-testing in the district. However, not counting school-level tests or time for test-prep, the amount of time devoted to taking mandatory assessments was about the same as the average Great City School district.[11] It may be that the use of school-acquired tests on top of those mandated by the state and local school systems was creating the sense—maybe even the reality—of over-testing. At the same time, it was clear that testing was driving the academic program to a greater extent than was instruction.

- The transition team saw little evidence that the district routinely used student work products to gauge student progress. The district does not have or use a rubric for examining student work.

- The district—like most other school districts in Tennessee—does not have access to data on the cost of postsecondary remedial courses taken by Nashville school graduates when they get to college.

Recommendations

Instructional Vision and Leadership

1) Encourage the school board to work with an outside consultant or group to develop a clear set of priorities and goals around better student achievement, indicators for measuring that progress, a calendar by which to monitor that progress, and a set of clear ground-rules and consequences for violating its own policies.

[11] Council of the Great City Schools, October 2015. *Student Testing in America's Great City Schools: An Inventory and Preliminary Analysis.*

2) Urge the school board, the superintendent, and senior staff to come together around a redefined theory of action for improving student achievement that provides greater instructional coherence, direction, and rigor.

3) Have the school board and administrative leadership strongly voice the school system's belief in and expectations for high academic achievement for all district students and build board indicators of progress around those expectations.

4) As part of the development of a new strategic plan, assess what was working and not working in the current strategic plan to inform the district's steps moving forward. The district should not just throw everything out and start over. Think carefully about what elements work and what doesn't and why.

5) Charge the CAO, the chief of schools, and instructional leaders with revamping the district's instructional guidance and support documents, particularly in reading, to provide more clarity as to what needs to be taught and how students will exhibit their understanding.

6) Develop and implement a superintendent evaluation system around progress on the district's academic and other priorities using the indicators the board created for monitoring purposes.

Goals

7) Revisit the district's academic goals to make sure that the school board and superintendent are in full agreement about where they want the district to go.

8) Ensure that all goal setting and monitoring documents include up-to-date data on the district's academic progress.

9) Make sure that all School Improvement Plans actually have next steps for how the school is going to address shortcomings in its instructional program before plans are approved.

10) Give the director of schools final sign-off authority on school improvement plans.

Organization and Staffing

11) Standardize job titles across each layer of the instructional department and flatten the organizational structure so it has fewer unnecessary layers.

12) Move the research office from reporting to the chief of staff to being a direct report to the superintendent.

13) Consider consolidating the government relations and federal programs functions. Consider moving the operation or splitting its compliance and grant-writing functions.

14) Consolidate the early learning innovation and pre-k programs into a single unit.

15) Develop and implement an ongoing program of professional development for the entire staff under the CAO.

Instructional Programming

16) Articulate a clear vision that **every child will read and practice with complex, grade-level text daily**. For example, begin by having the teaching and learning offices—with the help of teachers—identify key reading experiences over a given period. One particularly good resource is the Basal Alignment Project (BAP), which includes a folder for *Journeys.* BAP provides sample lessons that were vetted for use with "close reading" exercises, text-dependent questioning, and student exercises that would demonstrate student understanding of the texts. (The code for joining the BAP group is f4q6nm.)

17) Have the ELA offices identify key pieces of literature to be used across the district at particular points during the upcoming year. Couple this with strategies on how to support students during shared reading time in order to engage them with complex, grade-level text.

18) Focus on an aspect of complex grade-level text that could be addressed in the balanced literacy program with reading recovery teachers (in early grade levels) and literacy coaches/instructional coaches all working together. Focus on getting students access to grade-level texts to build background knowledge and academic vocabulary, while working on having students engage more in academic discussions. Over time, the district could build video segments to illustrate how this looks and sounds in Nashville. A number of other districts have videos that the district might want to consult. (The state's *Setting the Foundation: A Report on Elementary Grades Reading in Tennessee,* for example, is a good resource for describing an instructional model that would allow students in grades K-8 practice on complex, grade-level text each day.)

19) Incorporate the use of complex-text into monthly principal meetings to provide them with the direction and skills to emphasize and encourage teacher practice across content areas.

20) Organize and deploy a cross-functional team to develop a districtwide strategy to address reading. We also suggest that a focus on providing students with opportunities to engage with complex, grade-level text should be applied in each content area. The same strategies for close reading and guided reading are critical for mathematics as well.

21) Make sure that teachers across the district read the complex texts first and begin anticipating typical student misconceptions that might occur. Include words that need to be pulled out to give students context for what they are reading. This would help illustrate the link between language and conceptual understanding, which we suspect

is not widely understood. We also suggest that the district provide professional development and support for teachers in understanding what happens during the first, second, and third reading of material, as well as concrete suggestions or examples. The district could also use one or more lessons from the Basal Alignment Project to help reading recovery teachers, instructional coaches, and other school-based leaders operationalize what close reading means. Use lessons from BAP to discuss with teachers what they are seeing.

22) For the monthly principal meetings with their team leaders, focus on complex, grade-level texts. This does not need to be a "sit and get" session. Instead, provide concrete experiences for principals and their teams to build their knowledge about what complex texts look like and what they are designed to do. This will also help to ensure that there isn't a gap between what school-based reading recovery teachers are doing and what literacy coaches/instructional coaches are doing. (The Council might be able to help develop or provide initial trainings.)

23) The teaching and learning office might want to start creating an inventory of all the instructional materials that are used in schools throughout the district. We suspect that the district does not know how extensively individual schools and teachers are deviating from the district's main texts and what their effects might be.

24) The teaching and learning office needs to further refine the new scope and sequence document. There is currently insufficient clarity, direction, guidance, and support for teachers about what is to be taught and at what level of depth.

Assessments and Accountability

25) Charge the research office with preparing more granular analysis of where students are particularly strong or weak academically systemwide, school-by-school, and by grade. The analysis should be used strategically to think more carefully about where to emphasize changes in professional development and how to bolster the scope and sequence documents and instructional coaching.

26) Create a more effective system for training school-based staff on the use of data to inform and improve classroom practice.

27) Replace the district's current benchmark assessments with an instrument that is better aligned to state standards. Administer the exams in English and Spanish.

28) Curtail the purchase or use of other standardized assessments at the school level.

29) Incorporate the routine use of data from formative, summative, and end-of-course assessments into professional development offerings. Link results to strategies to improve instruction in identified areas of student need.

30) Provide stronger guidance to teachers on the use of standards-based grading.

Synopsis

The Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools are loaded with talented teachers and administrators who are committed to providing the best education to the community's children. It also enjoys a community that supports public education in all its forms. And the board of education has recently selected a new superintendent who is listening carefully to the community about what it wants in its schools.

At the same time, the school system has not produced the kinds of improvements in student academic attainment that the community has been looking for. Reading and math performance has been stagnant for several years and achievement gaps are not showing signs of narrowing. There have been some improvements in graduation rates, but it is not clear that students are graduating with the skills they need to be fully successful in college or careers.

The superintendent's transition team that worked on student achievement issues concluded after its interviews and review of the data that much of the district's inability to improve rests in its leadership's lack of focus on student achievement and on the system's lack of instructional coherence and guidance for schools. The theory of action has amounted to delegating responsibility for improving student achievement largely to schools without providing the direction, support, or capacity-building that school personnel need. It has doubled down on that approach by showering schools with various programs and initiatives but with little guidance on how and when to apply those initiatives. The result is an overall instructional program that lacks the definition and coherence necessary to produce higher student achievement in urban schools.

The transition team's high-level findings and recommendations are built around this one central observation, and are meant to encourage the system and its leadership to bear down on this one critical priority and to create the clarity and support that teachers need to be successful on behalf of their children. This will mean recalibrating the district's general theory of action. The student achievement transition team strongly backs the new superintendent and offers its continued support to the school system and the children it educates.

Appendix A. Additional Analysis and Comparison of Nashville with Other Major Urban School Systems on Selected Academic Indicators

Exhibit A-1. Size of Pre-K Enrollment as a Percent of Kindergarten Enrollment

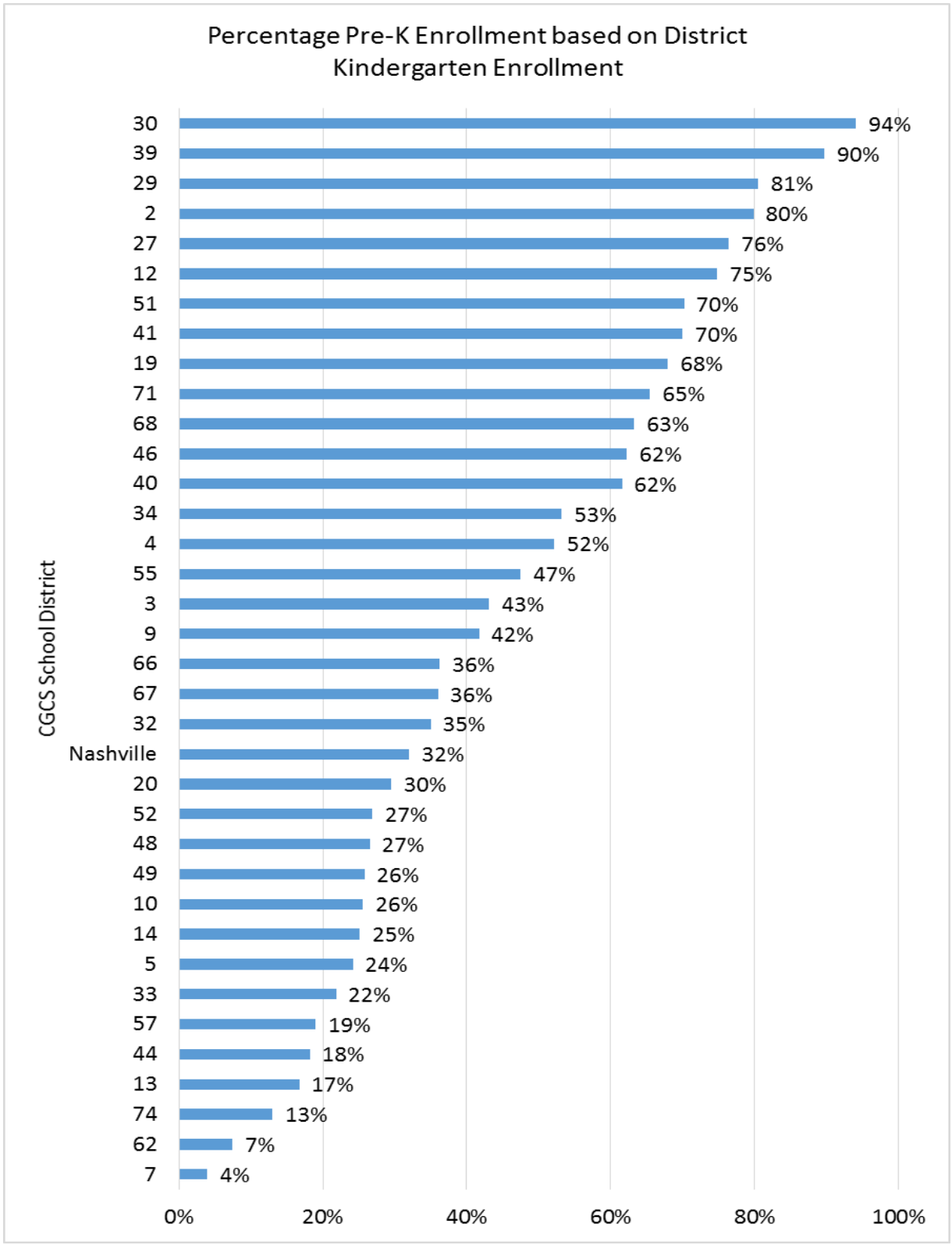


Exhibit A-2. Percent of Students Absent—Third Grade

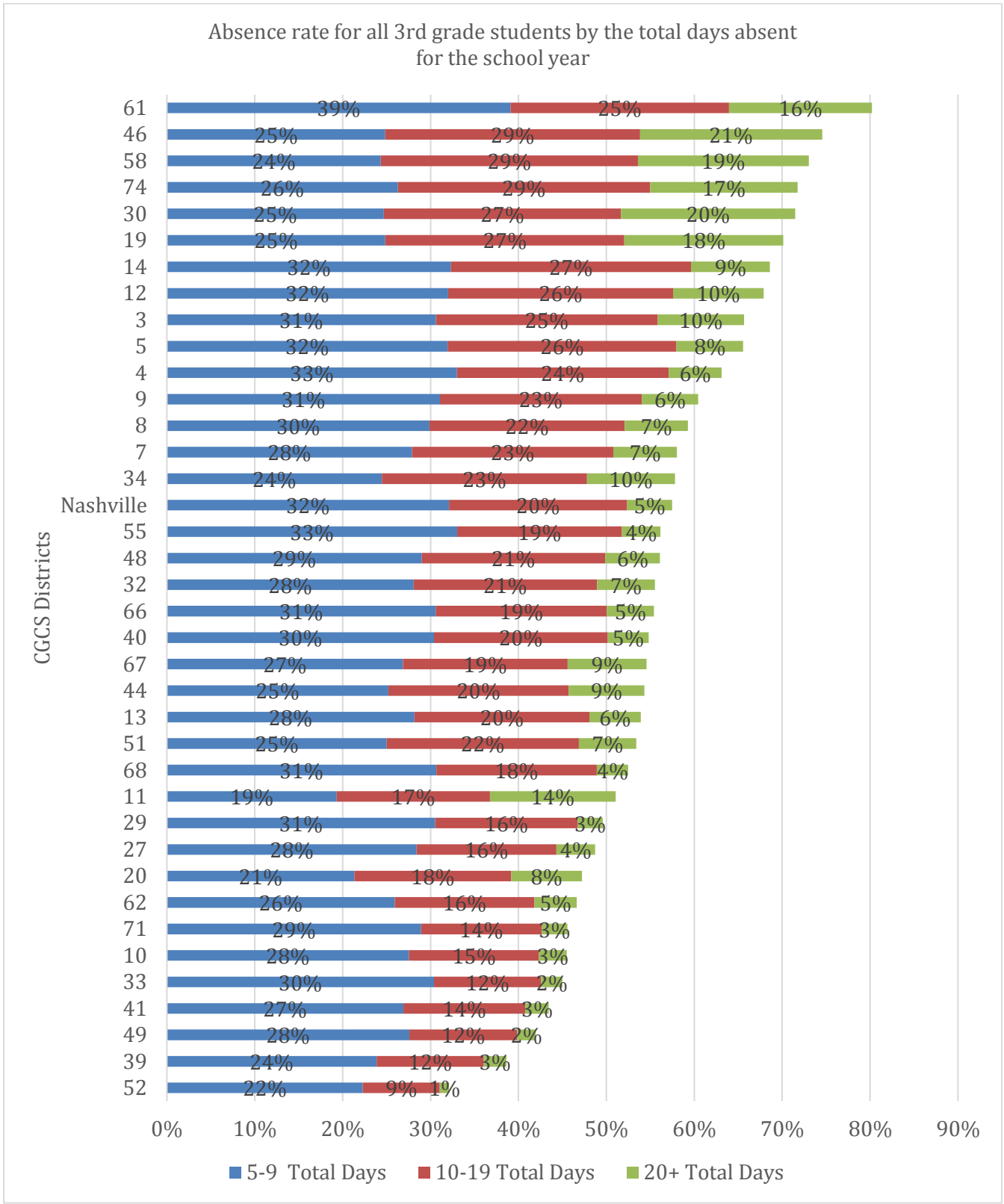


Exhibit A-3. Percent of Students Absent—Sixth Grade

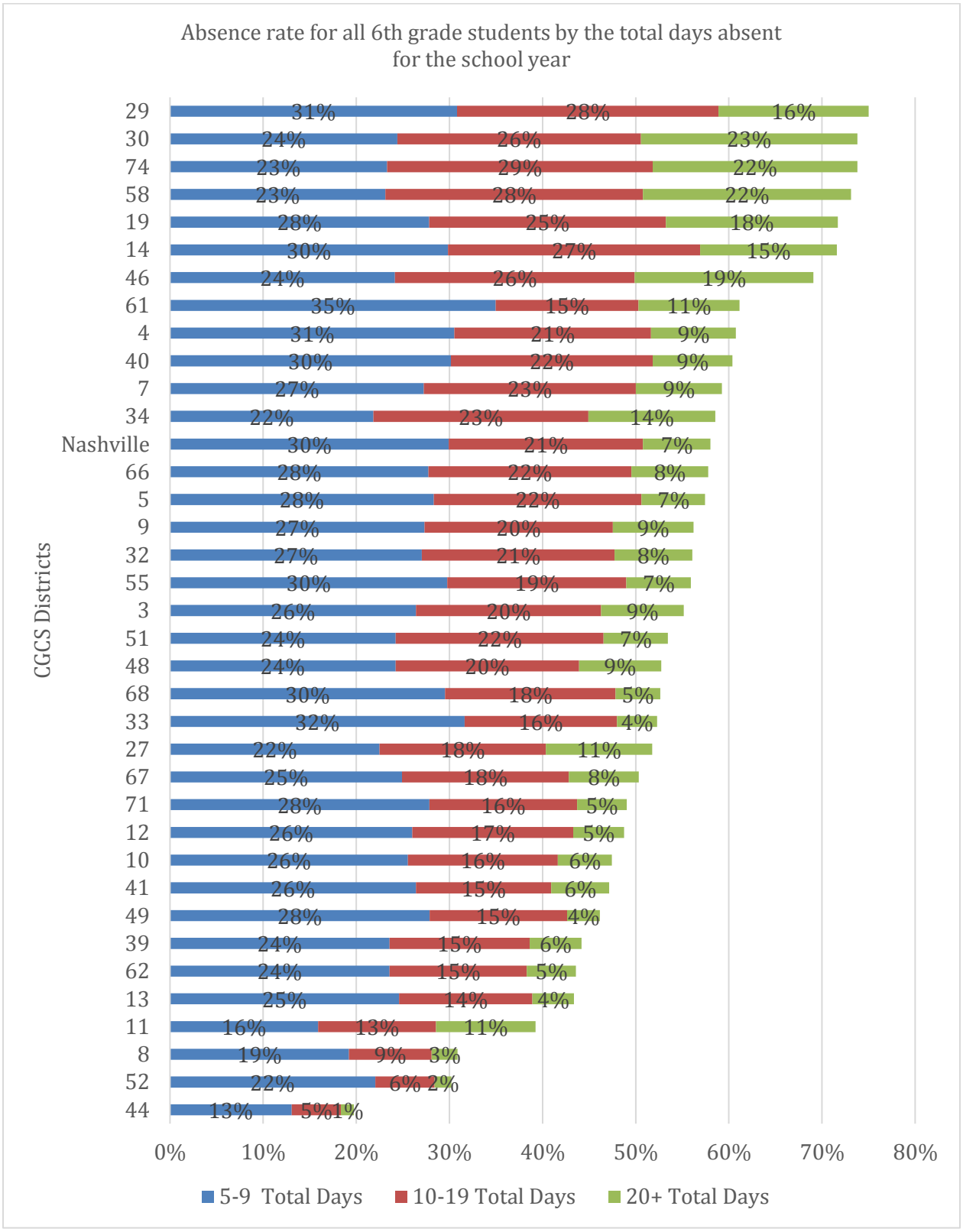


Exhibit A-4. Percent of Students Absent—Ninth Grade

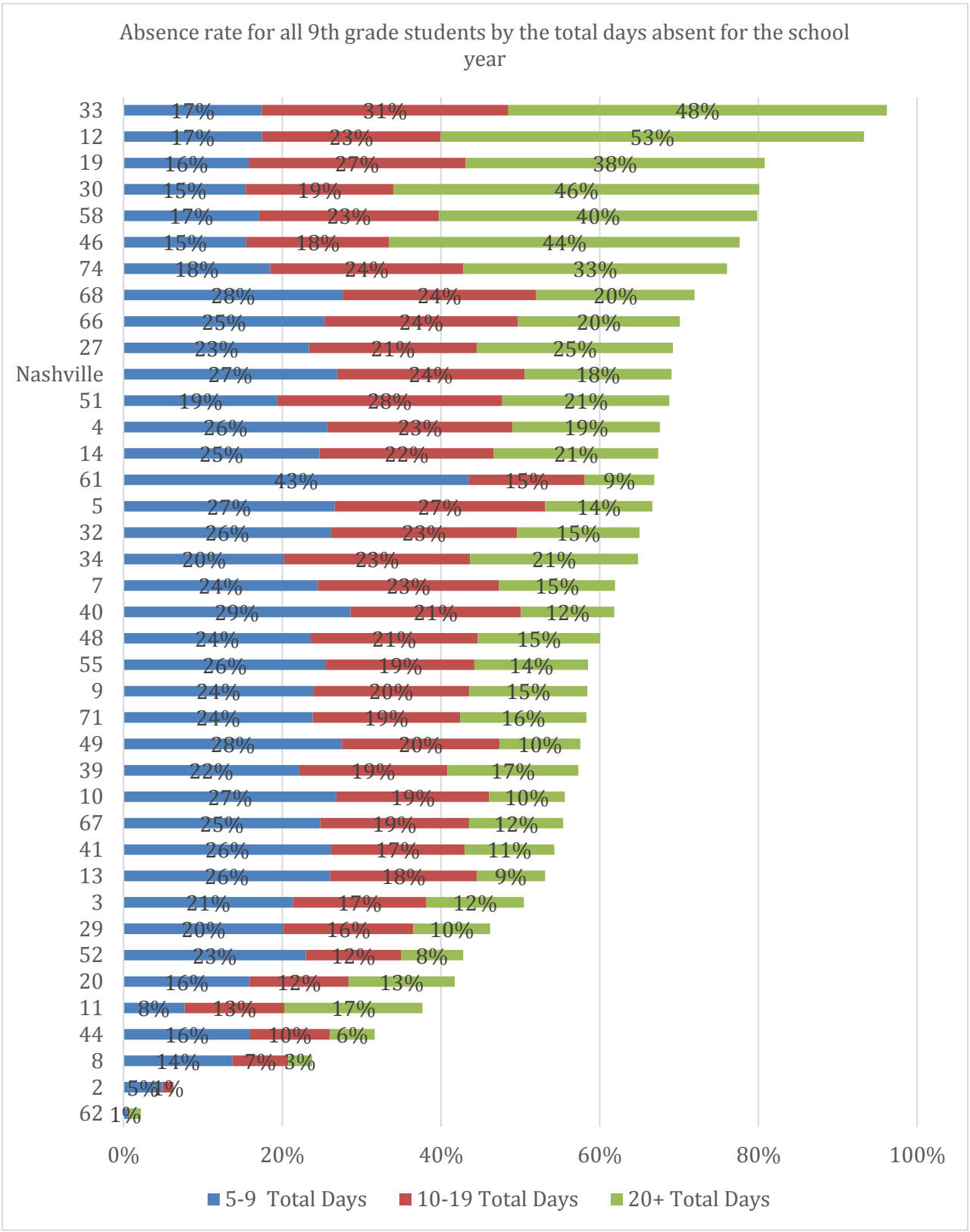


Exhibit A-5. Rate of Instructional Days Missed Due to Suspensions per 100 Students

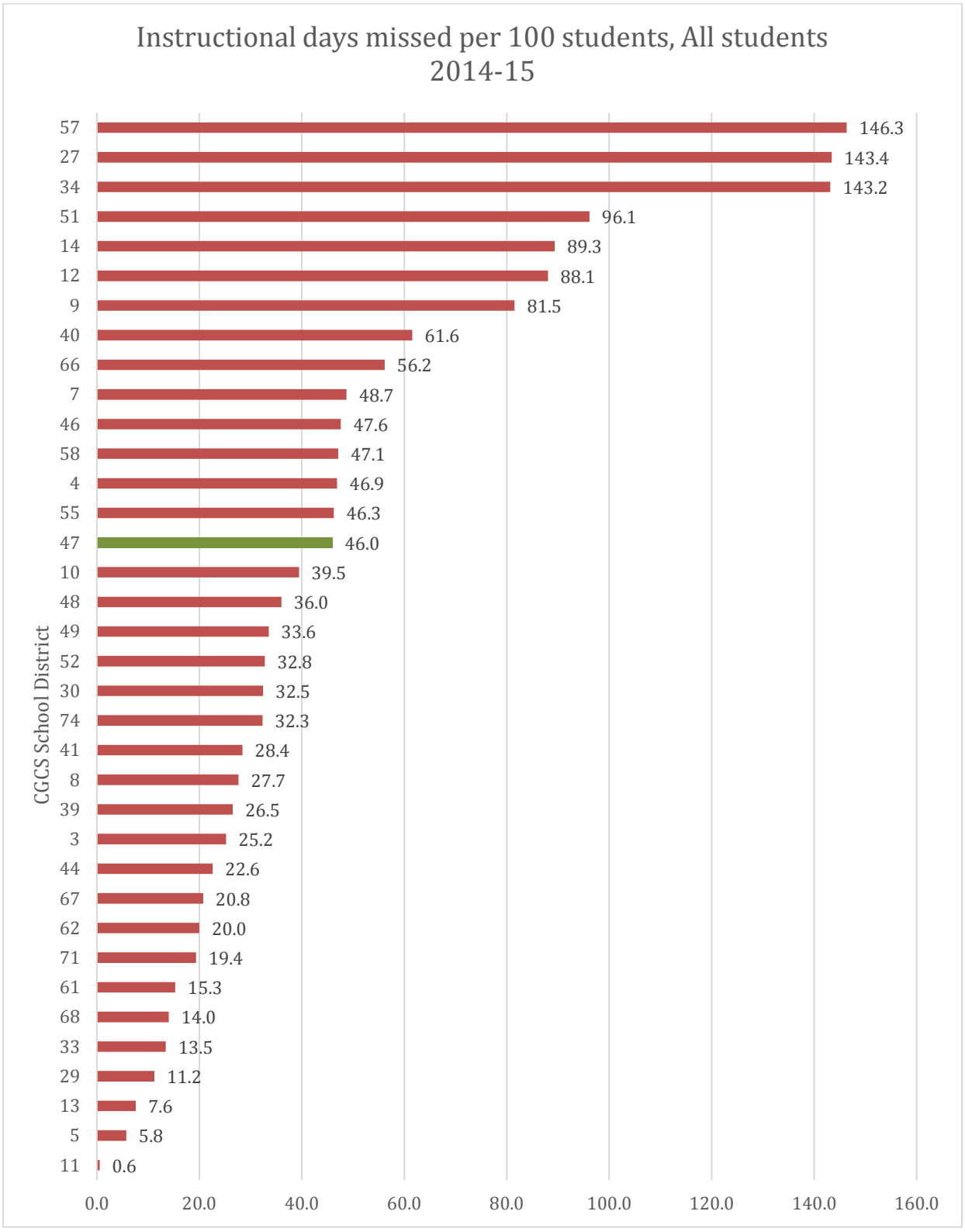


Exhibit A-6. Algebra I/Integrated Math I by Grade Completed

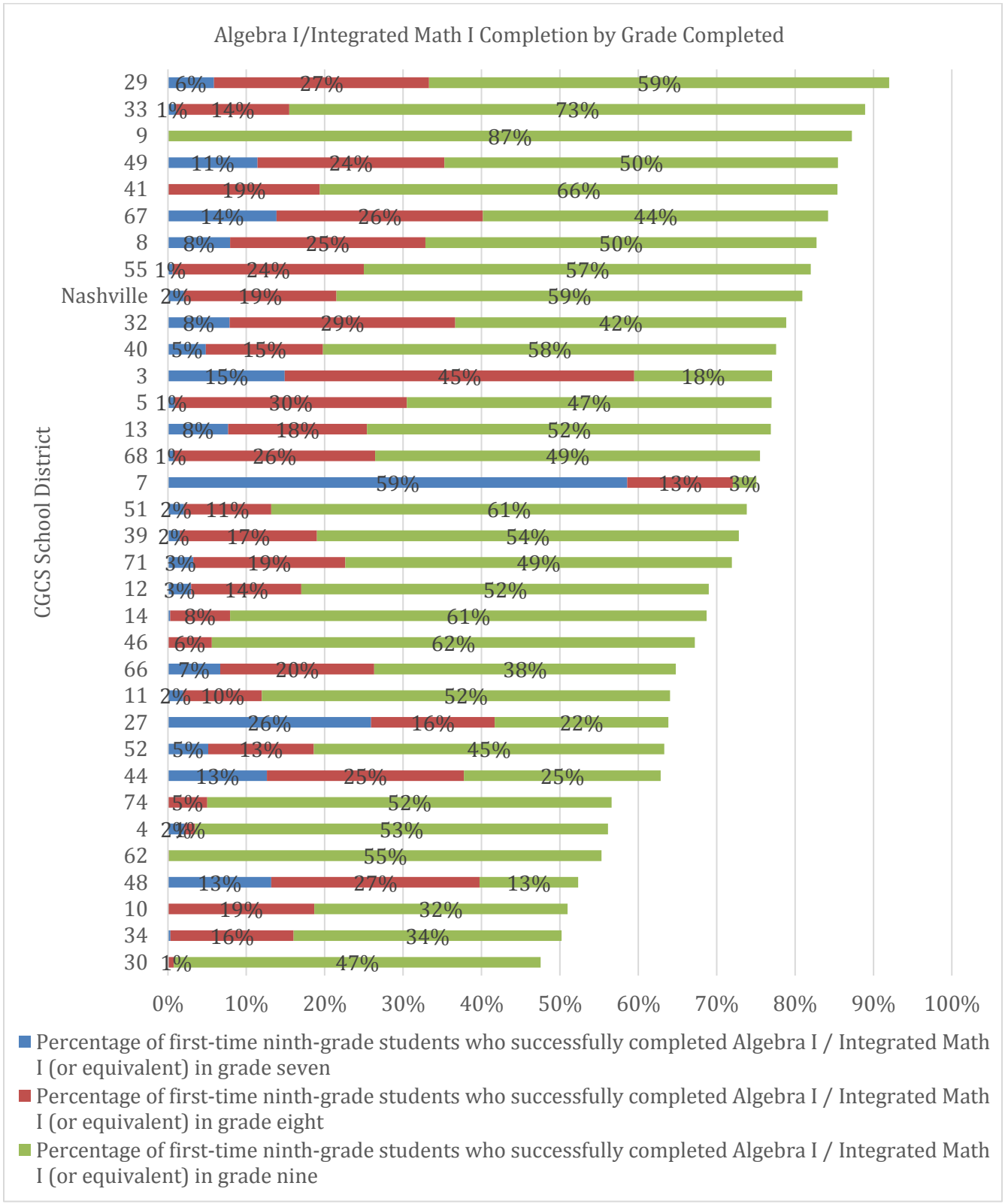


Exhibit A-7. Percent of Ninth Graders Who Failed One or More Core Courses

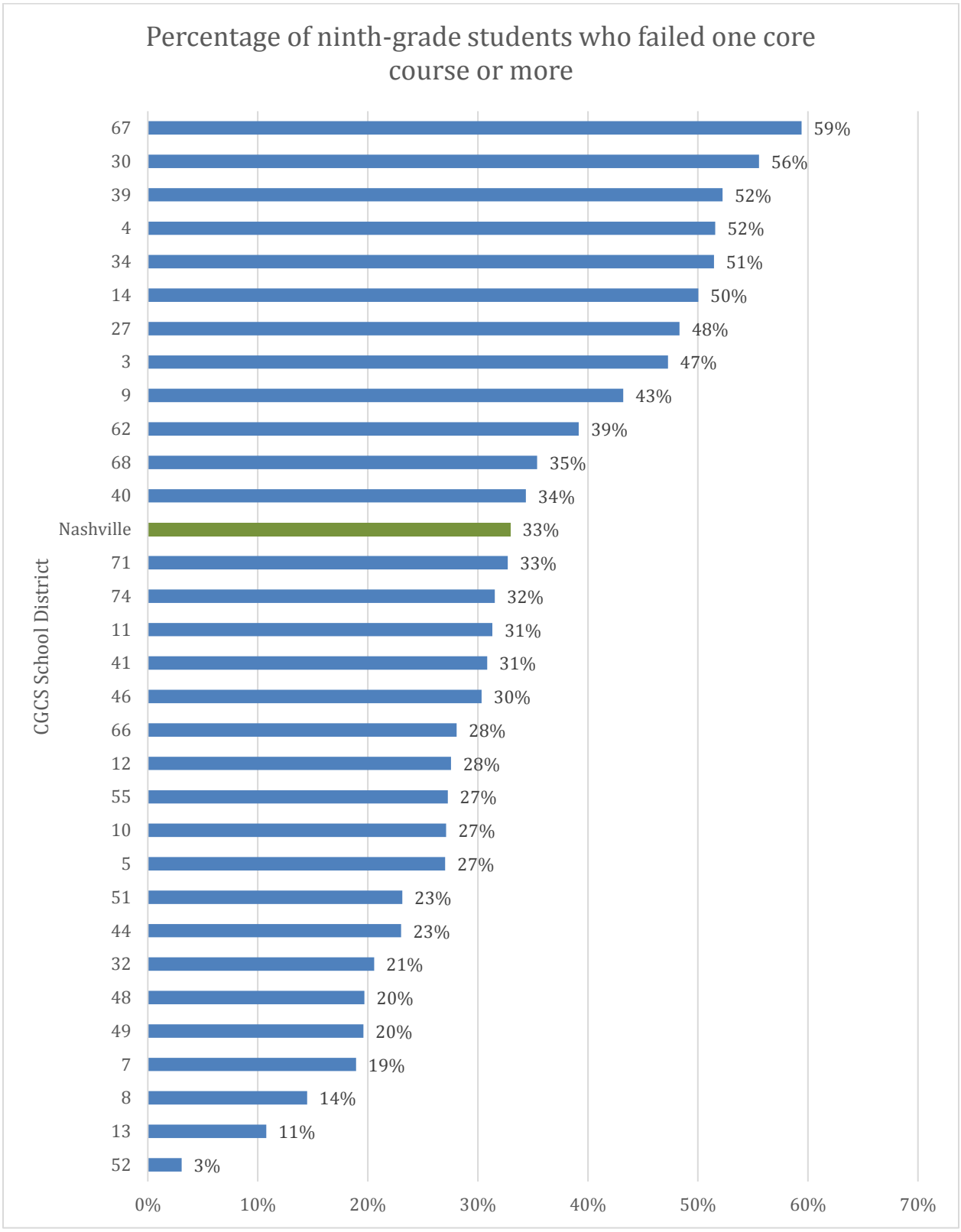


Exhibit A-8. Algebra I/Integrated Math I Ninth Grade Overall Completion by District Graduation Rate

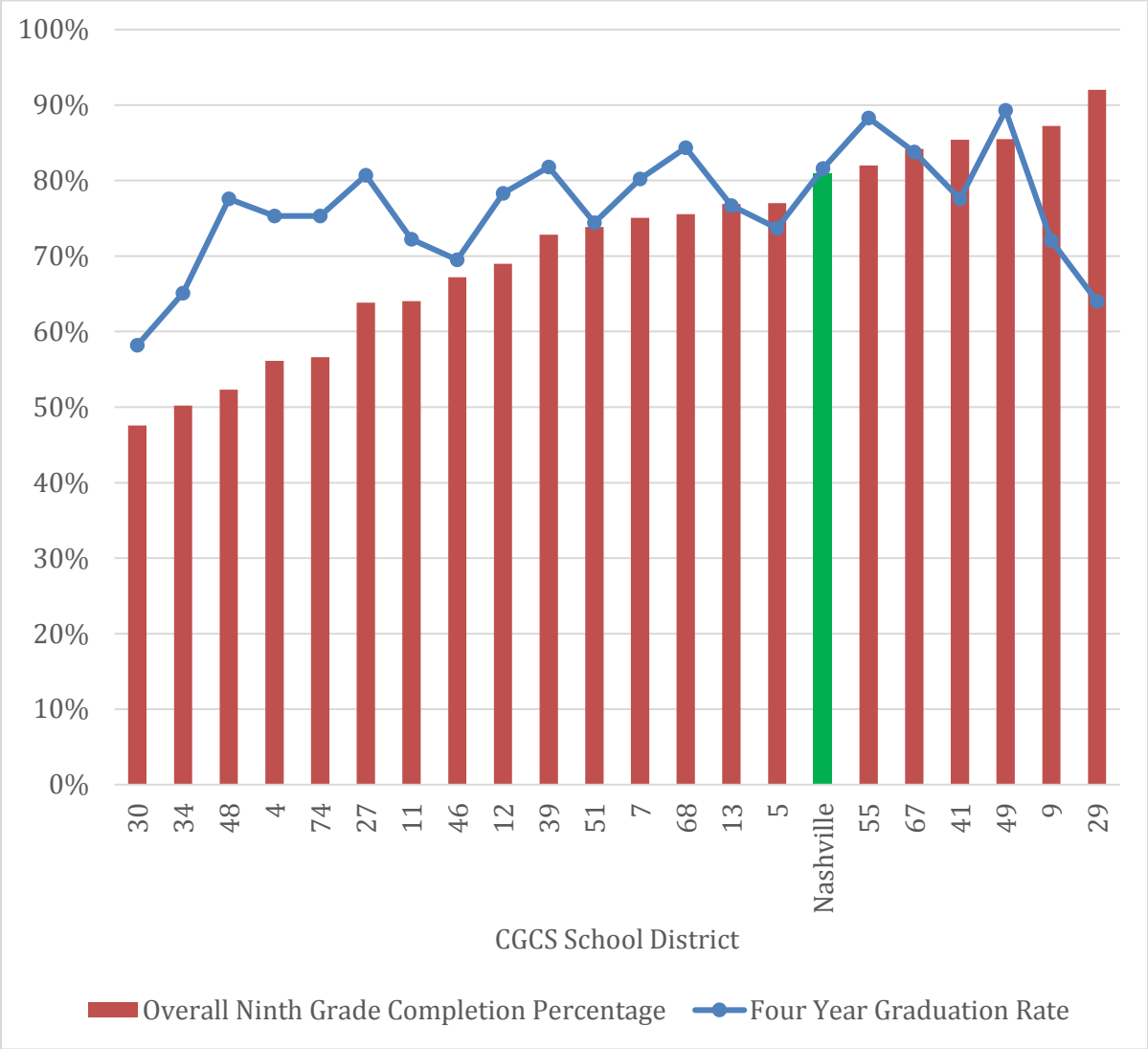


Exhibit A-9. Percent of Students Taking One or More Advanced Placement Courses

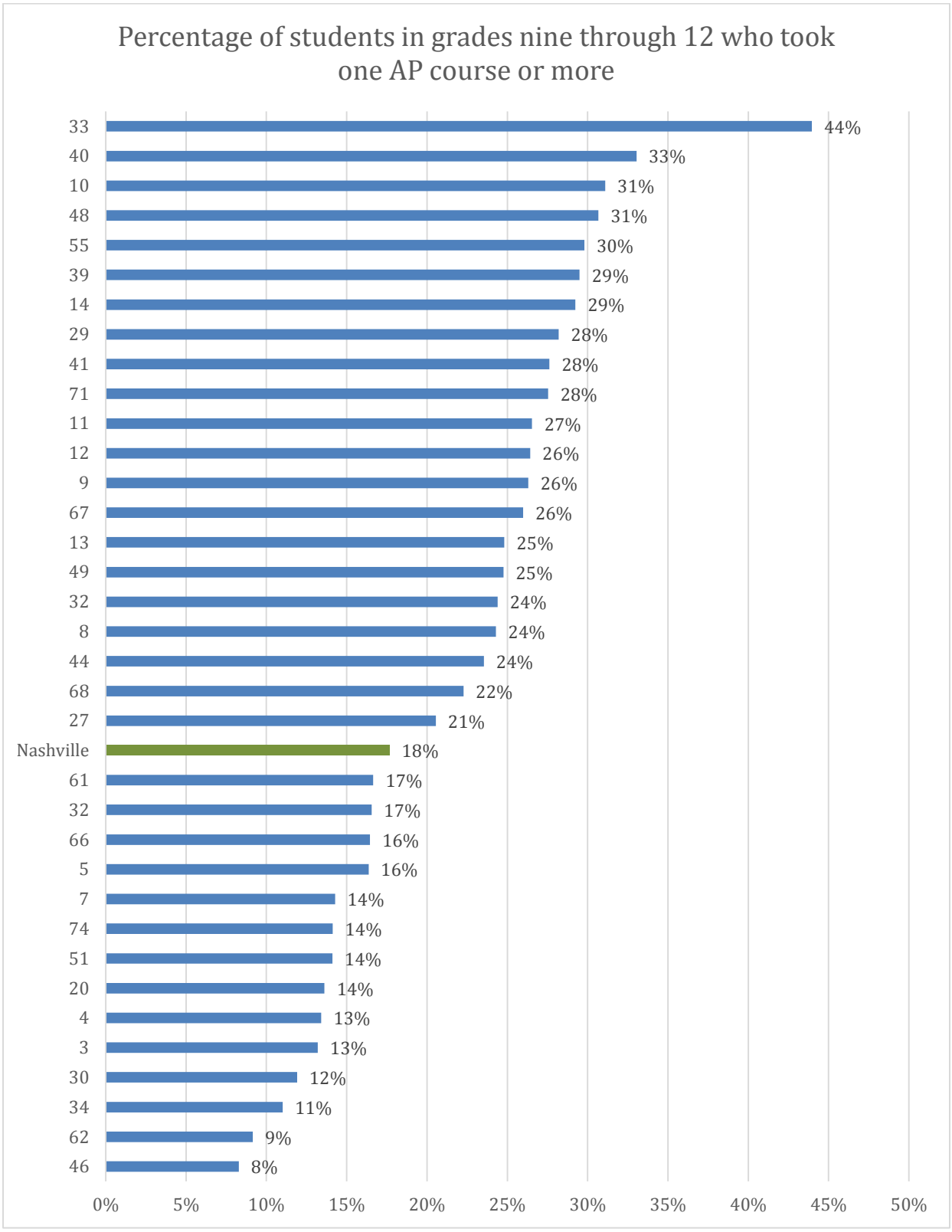


Exhibit A-10. Percent of AP Exams at Three of Higher.

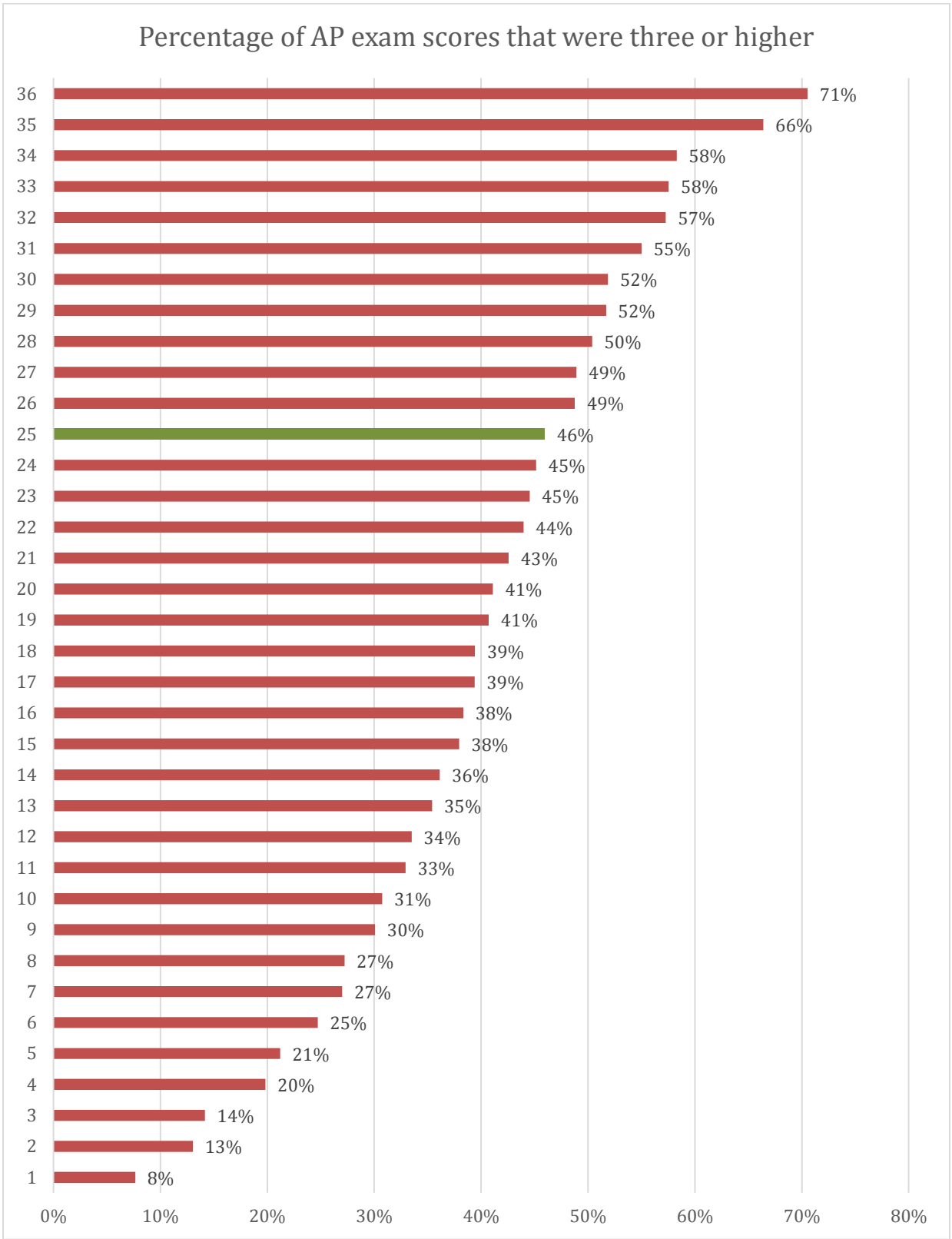
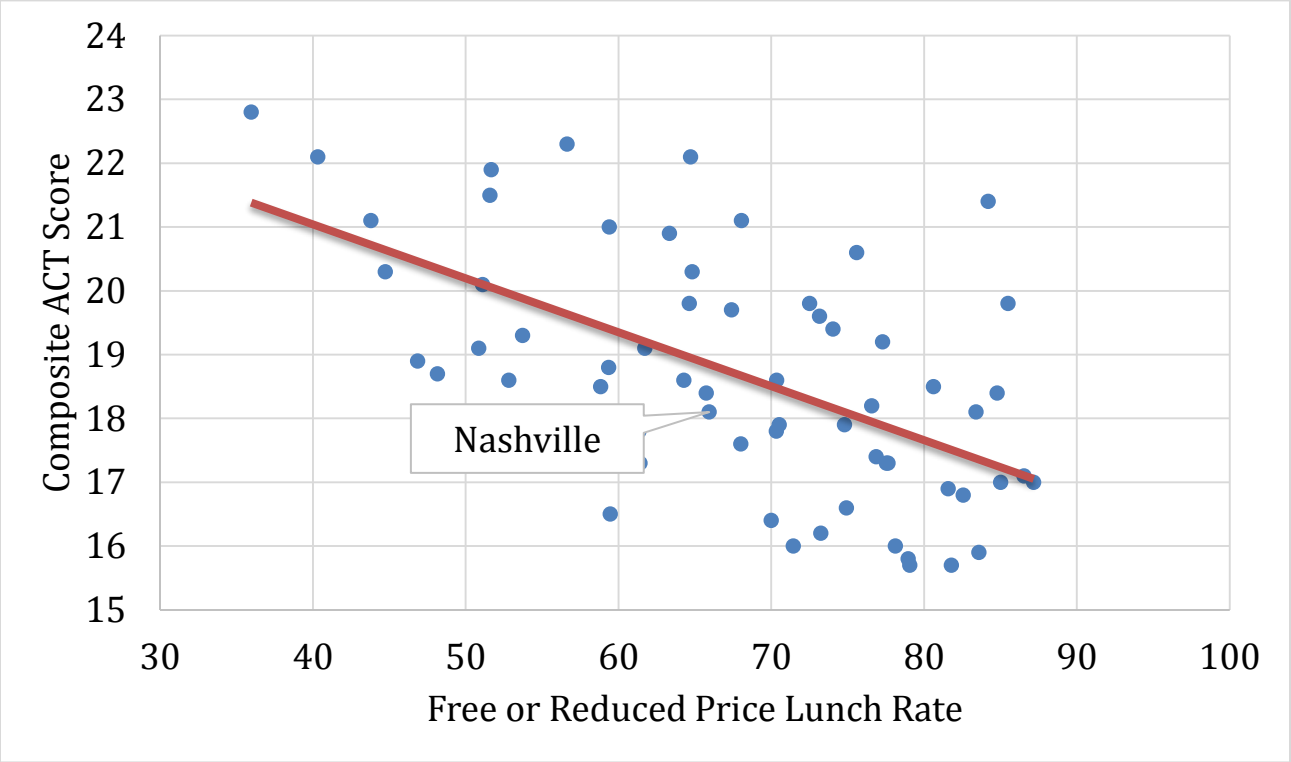
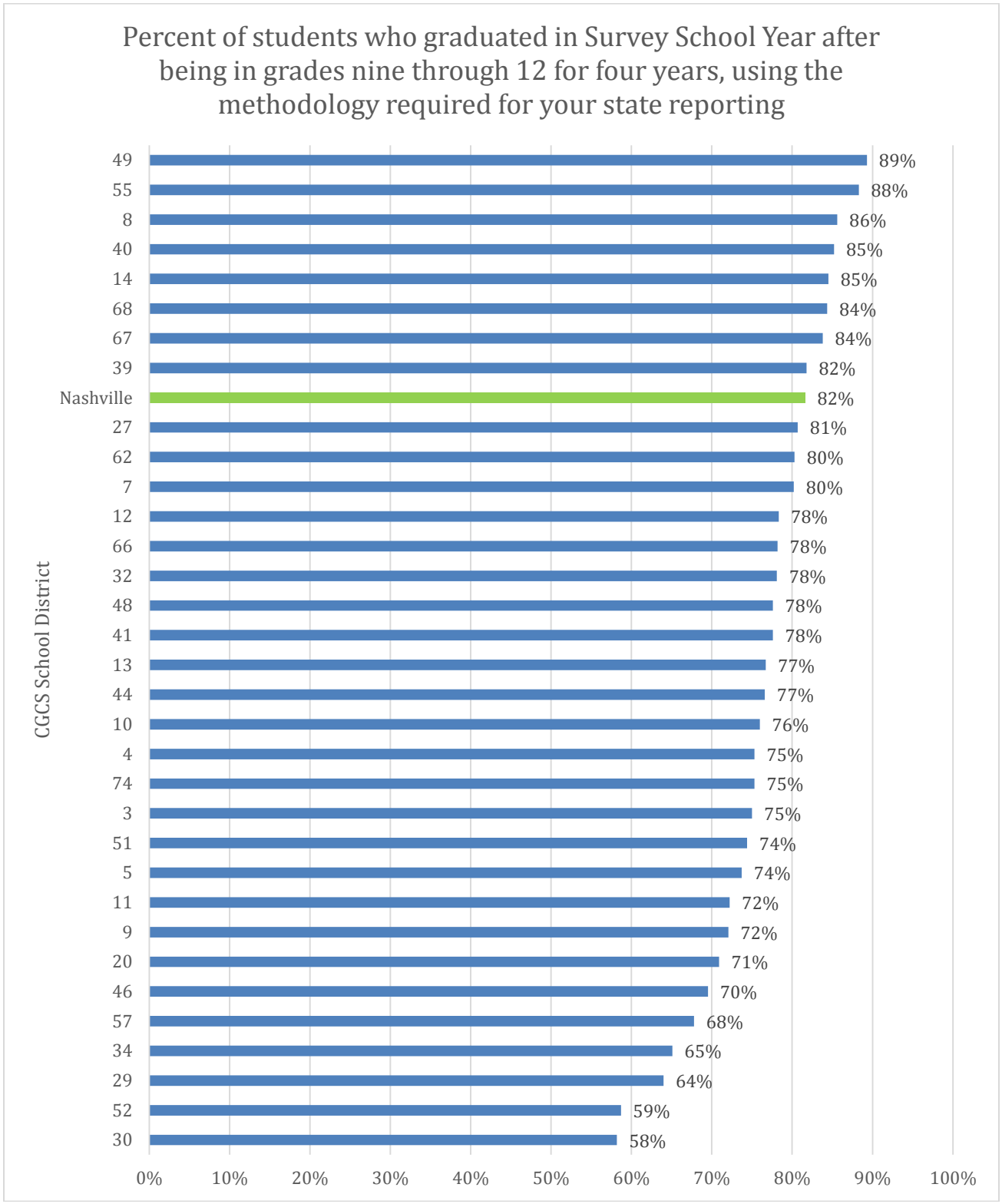


Exhibit A-11. ACT Composite Score by Free or Reduced Price Lunch Rate for CGCS School Districts



65.9% FRPL and 18.1 ACT composite

Exhibit A-12. Four-Year Graduation Rates.



Appendix B. Organizational Structure of Office of the Chief Academic Officer

Organizational Structure

Exhibit B-1. Chief Academic Officer (CAO)

Exhibit B-2. K-12 Instruction

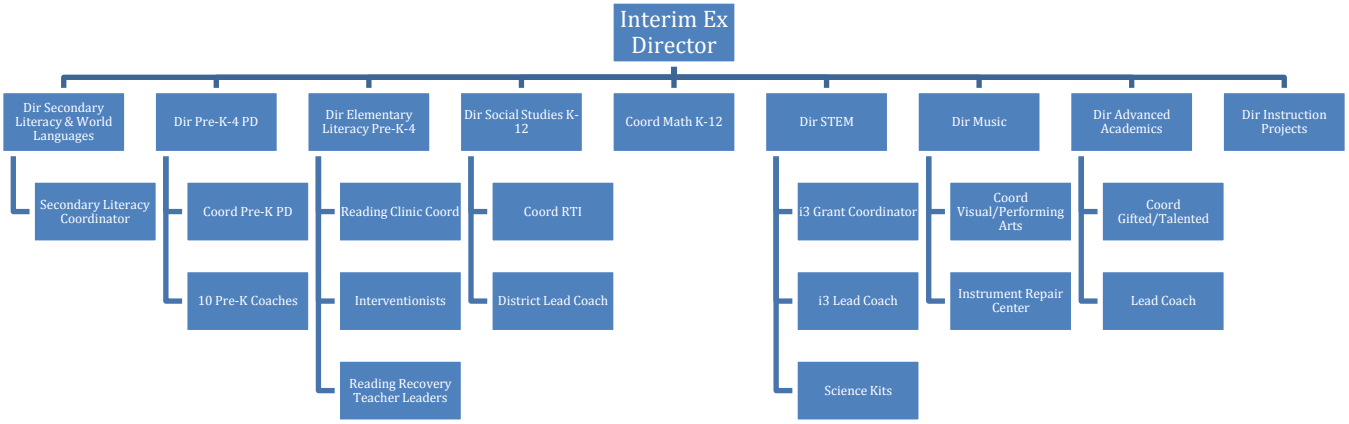


Exhibit B-3. Student Services

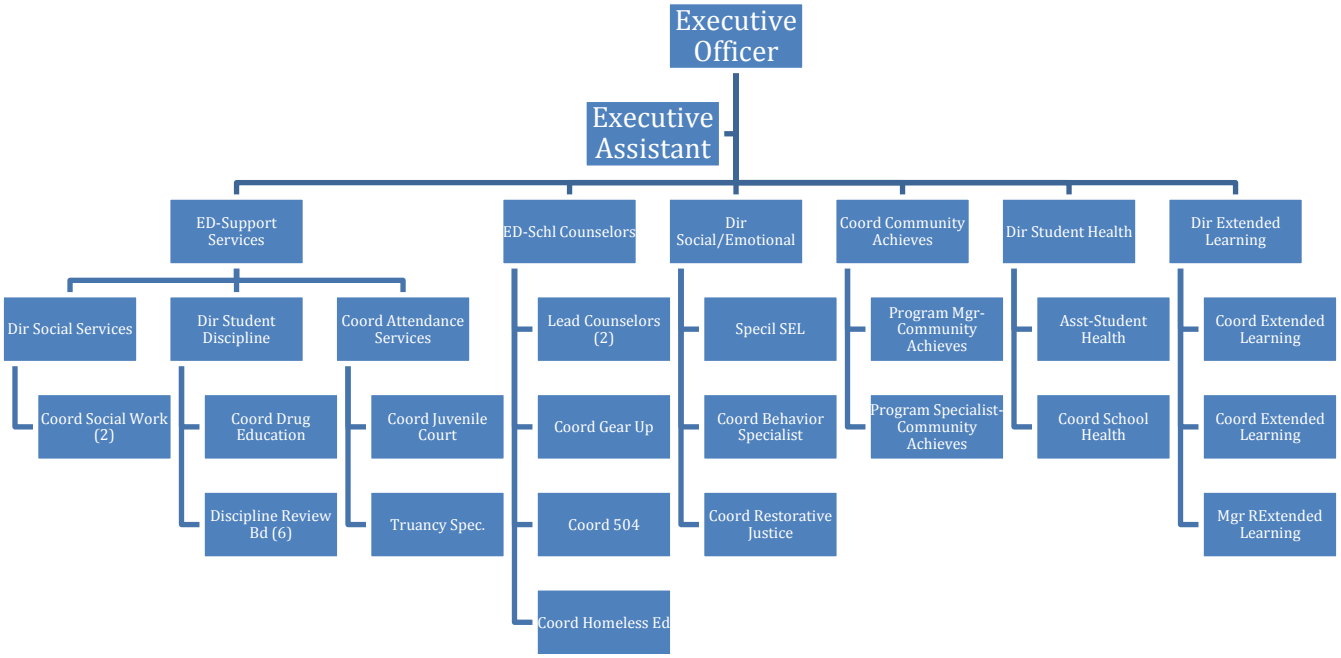


Exhibit B-4. Early Learning

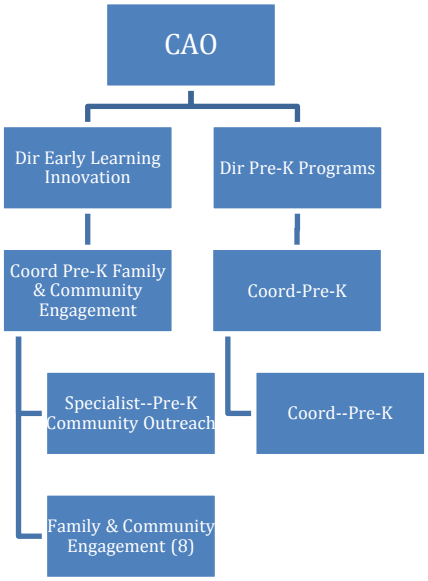


Exhibit B-5. Instructional Support—Exceptional Education

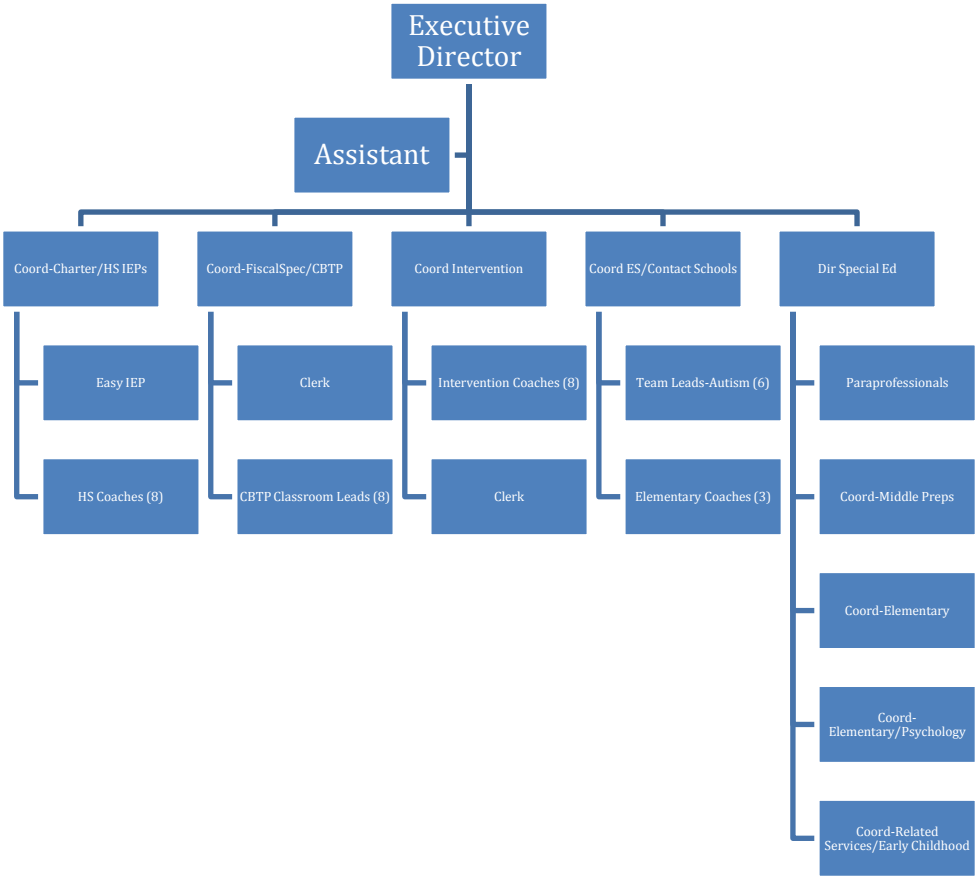


Exhibit B-6. Instructional Support--English Learners

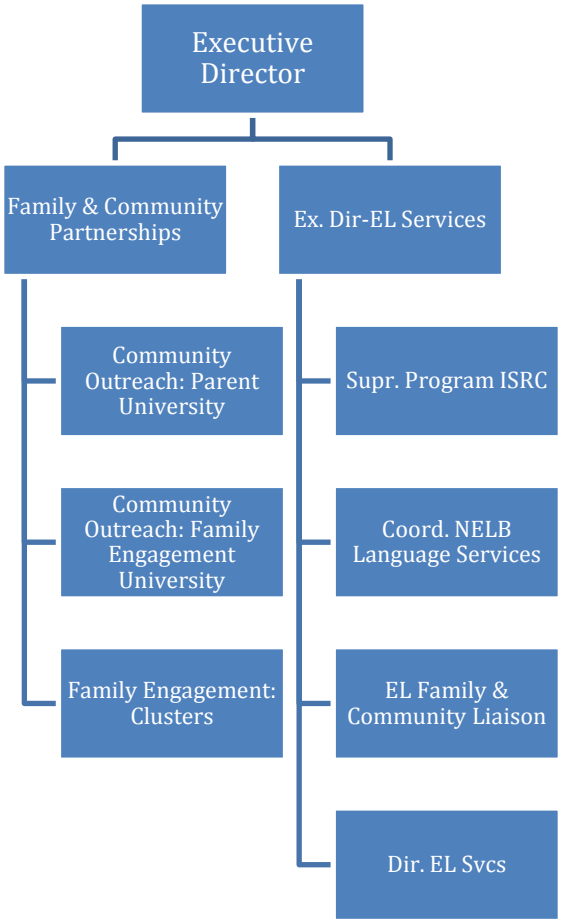


Exhibit B-7. Learning Technology and Library Services

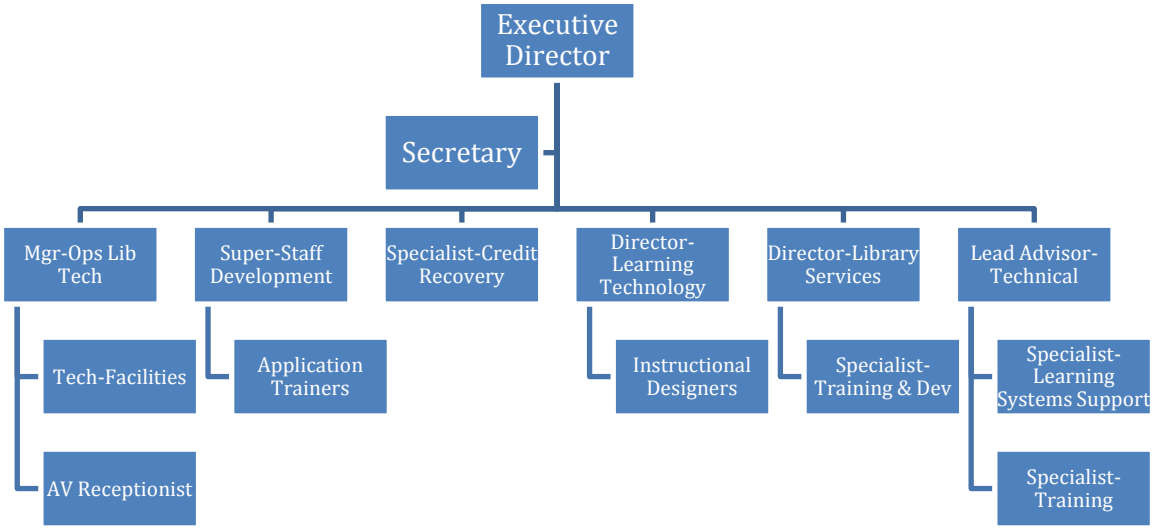


Exhibit B-8. Academies and CTE

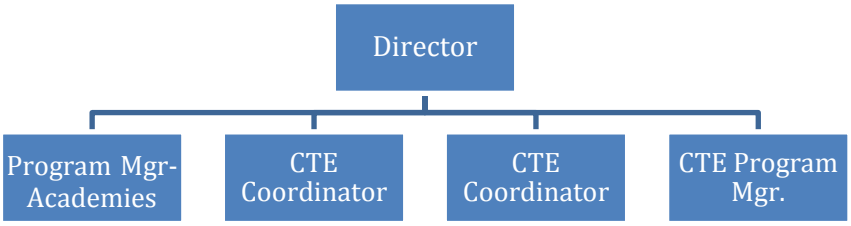
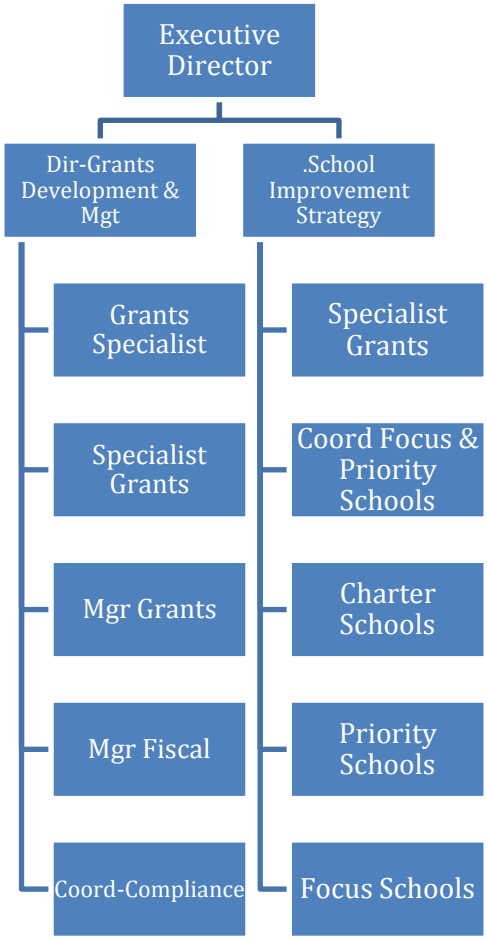
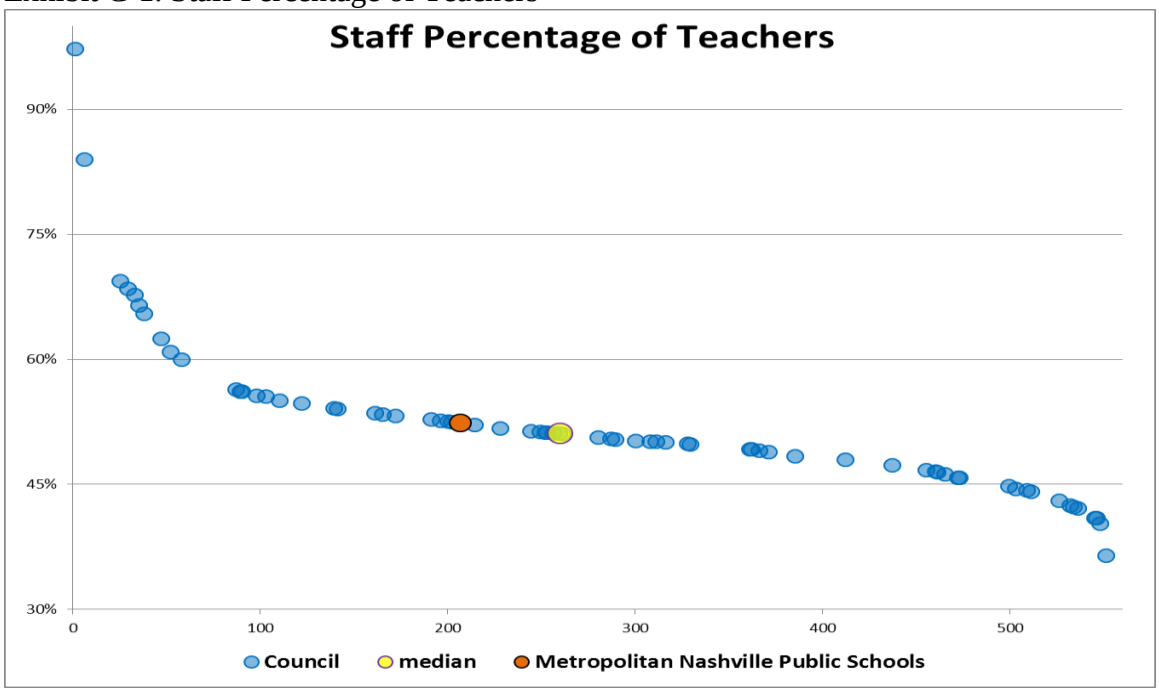


Exhibit B-9. Federal Programs



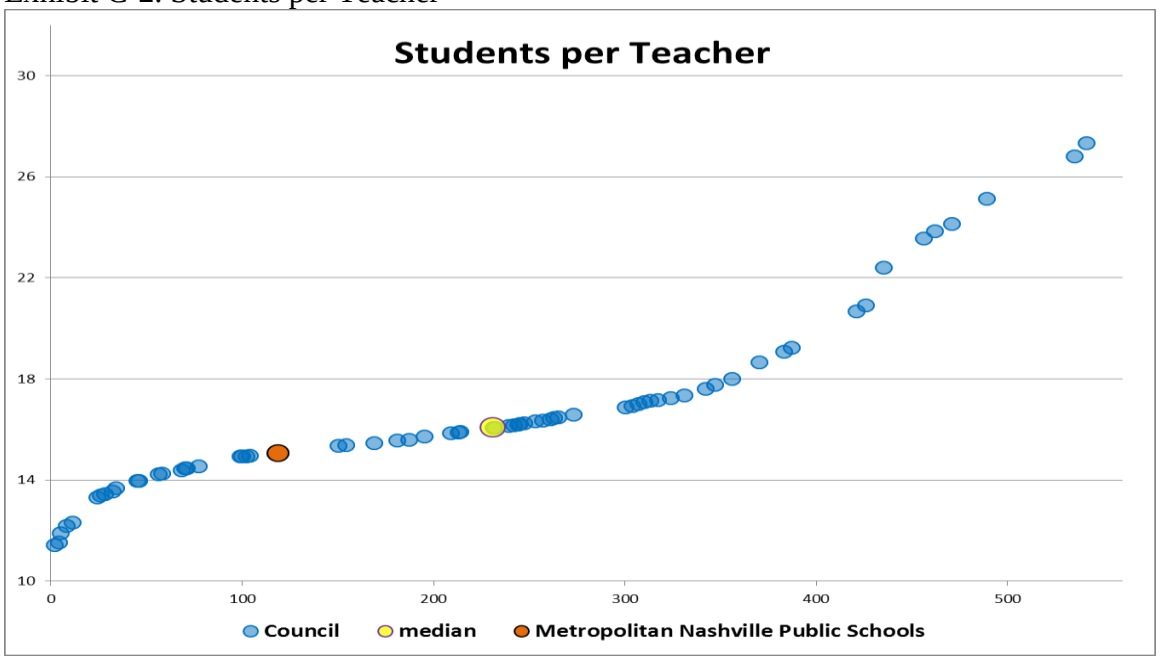
Appendix C. General Staffing Levels

Exhibit C-1. Staff Percentage of Teachers



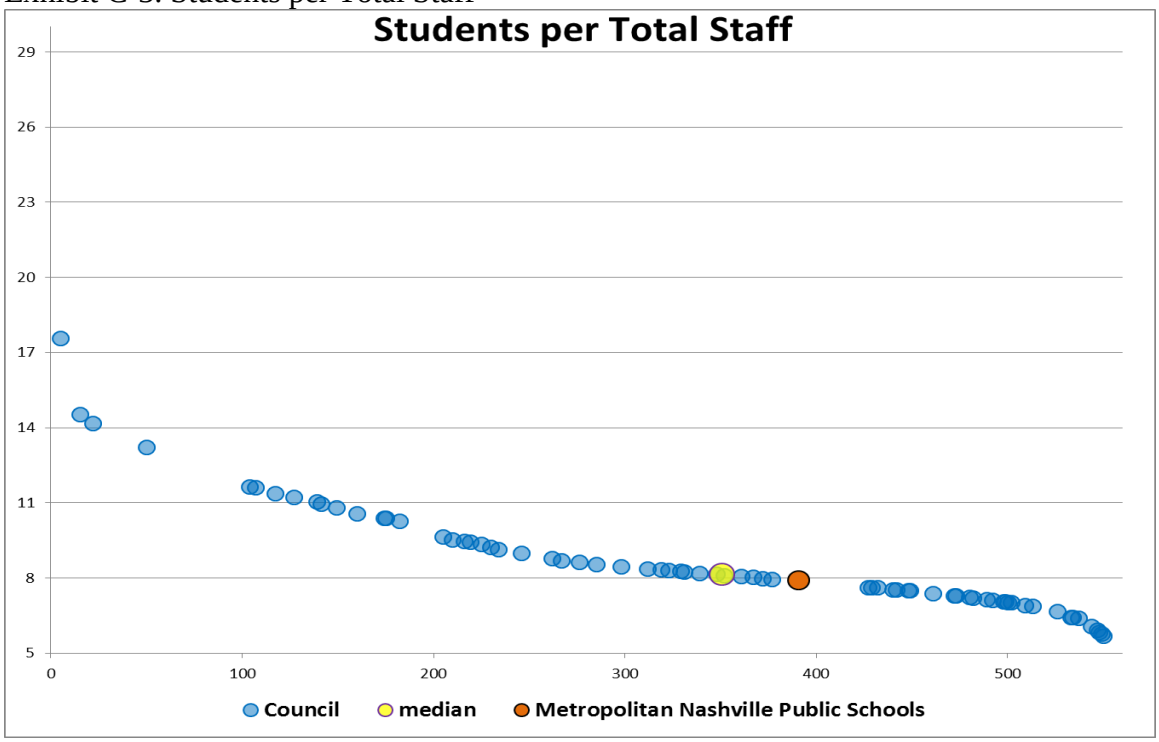
Y-axis = number of students-to-total staff, X-axis = Relation to Great City School districts.
* Some 52.3 percent of all staff in Metropolitan Public Schools were teachers, compared to a median of 51.1 percent in the Great City Schools. (Note that each blue dot represents a city school district.)

Exhibit C-2. Students per Teacher



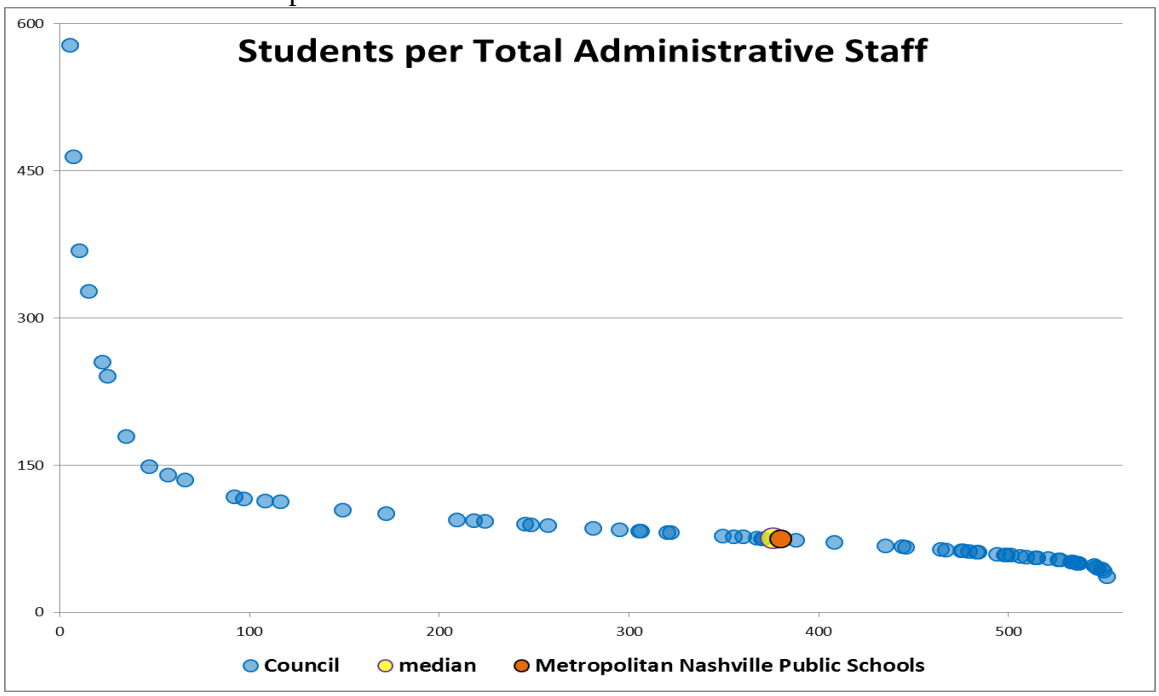
Y-axis = number of students-to-total staff, X-axis = Relation to Great City School districts.
* The ratio of students to teachers in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools was 15.1:1, compared to a median of 16.1:1 in the Great City Schools. (Note that each blue dot represents a city school district.)

Exhibit C-3. Students per Total Staff



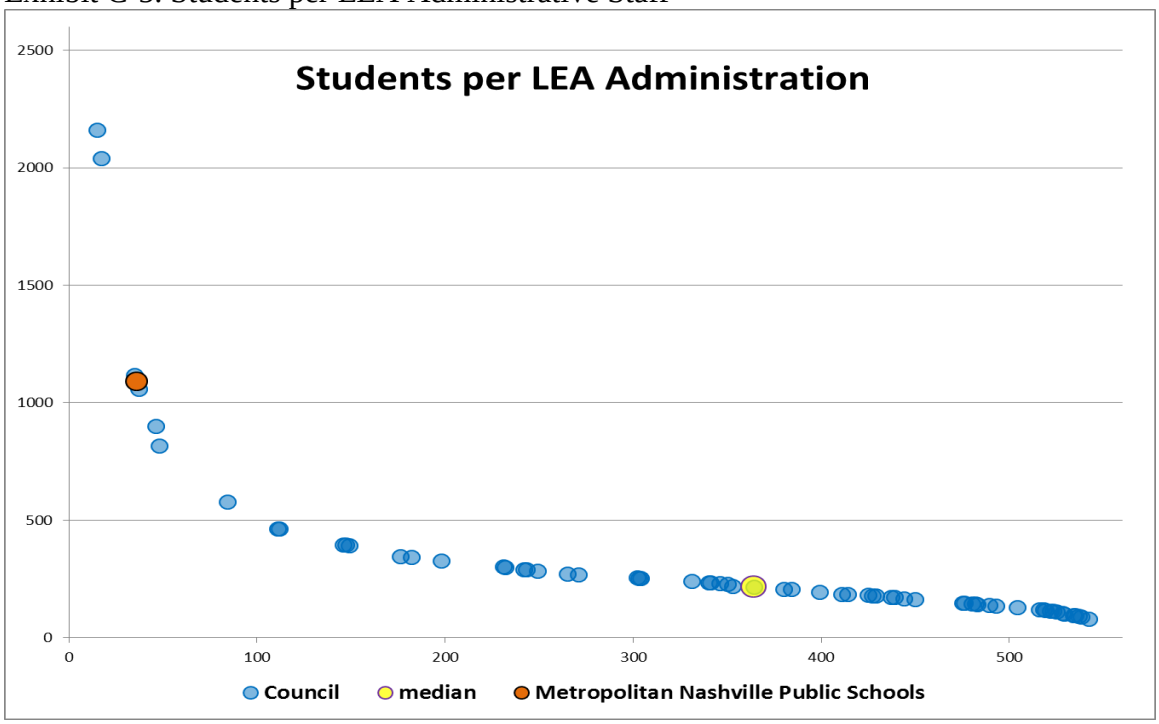
Y-axis = number of students-to-total staff, X-axis = Relation to Great City School districts.
* The ratio of students to all staff in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools was 7.9:1, compared to the median of 8.1:1 in the Great City Schools. (Note that each blue dot represents a city school district.)

Exhibit C-4. Students per Total Administrative Staff



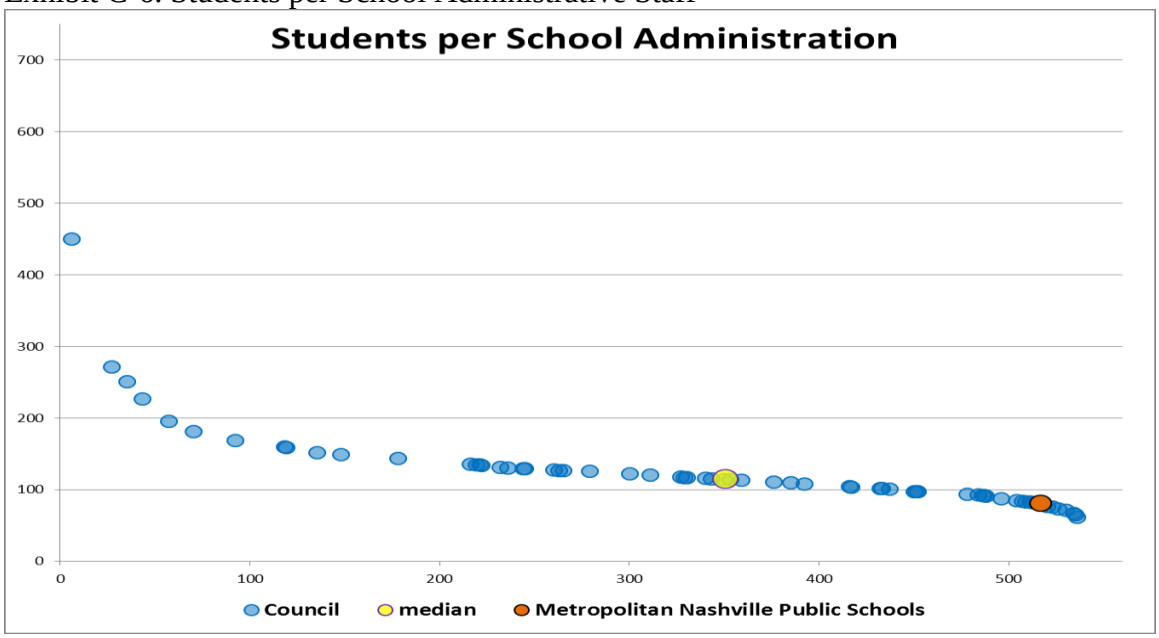
Y-axis = number of students-to-total staff, X-axis = Relation to Great City School districts.
* The ratio of students to all administrators in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools was 74.7:1, compared to the median of 75.2:1 in the Great City Schools. (Note that each blue dot represents a city school district.)

Exhibit C-5. Students per LEA Administrative Staff



Y-axis = number of students-to-total staff, X-axis = Relation to Great City School districts.
* The ratio of students to LEA administrators in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools was 1090:1, compared to the median of 216.2:1 in the Great City Schools. (Note that each blue dot represents a city school district.)

Exhibit C-6. Students per School Administrative Staff



Y-axis = number of students-to-total staff, X-axis = Relation to Great City School districts.
* The ratio of students to school administrators in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools was 80.2:1, compared to the median of 114.6:1 in the Great City Schools. (Note that each blue dot represents a city school district.)

Appendix D. Special Education Data Analysis

Exhibit D-1. Percentage of Students with IEPs

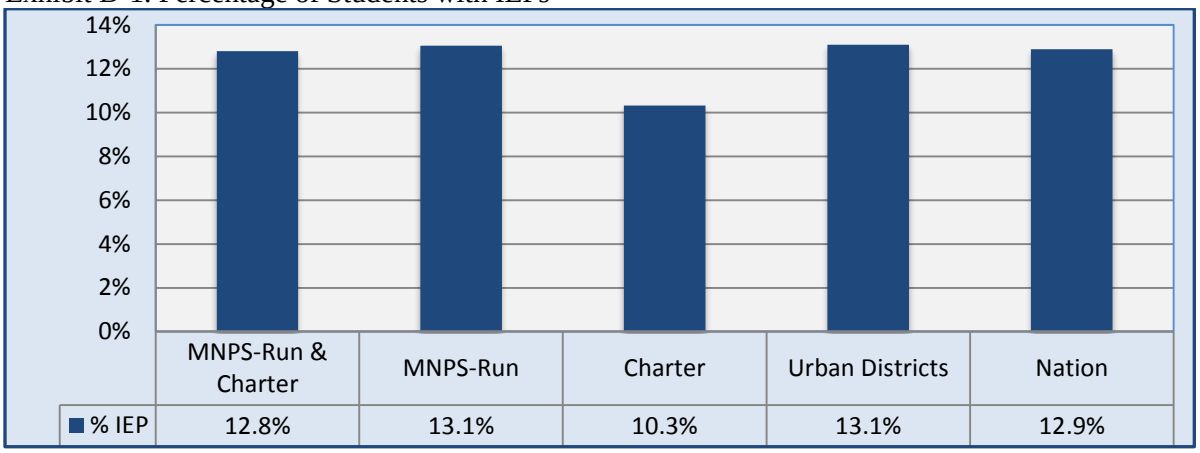


Exhibit D-2. Percentage of PS/PK Early Childhood Students with IEPs

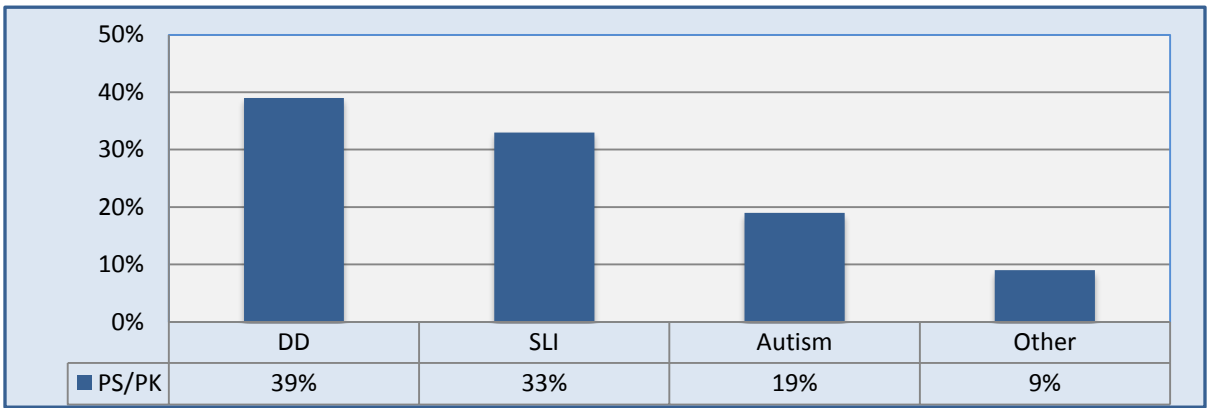


Exhibit D-3. Percentages of Students with IEPs by Disability Area for MNPS-Run Schools and Charter Schools

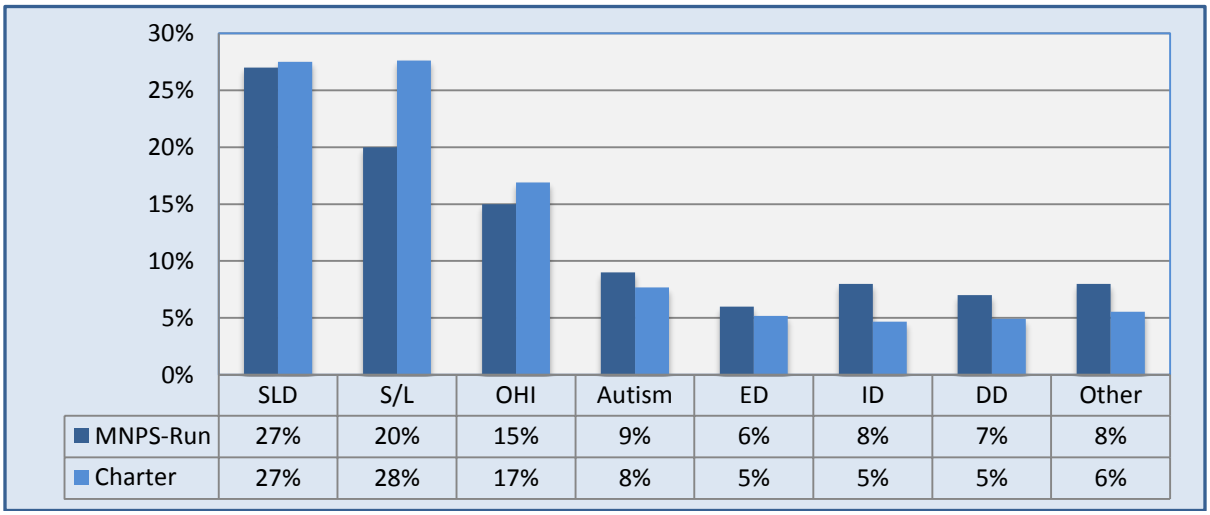
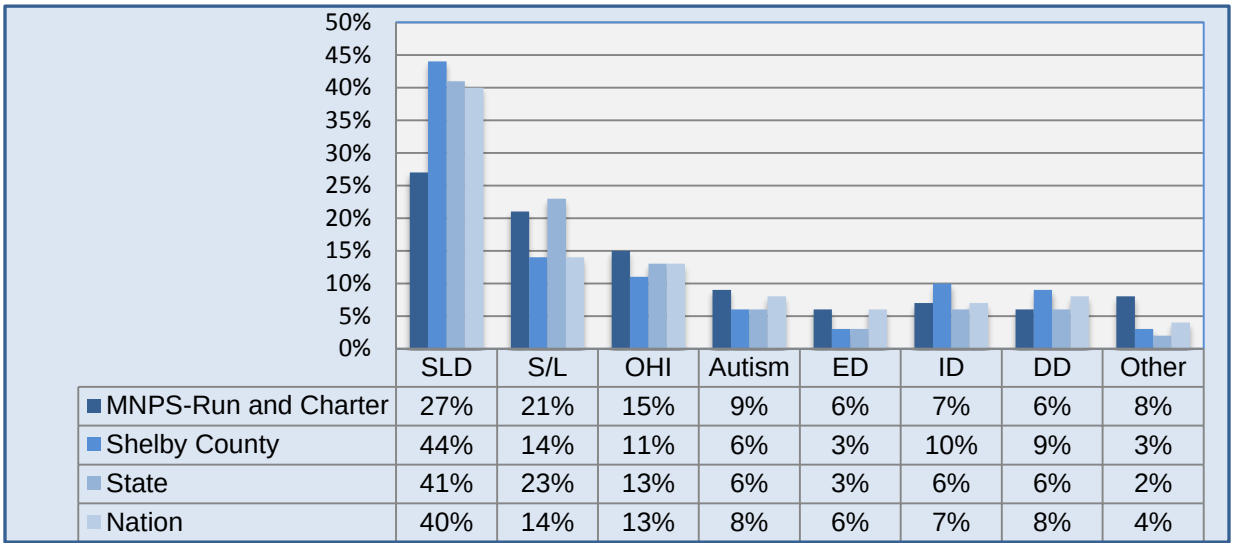
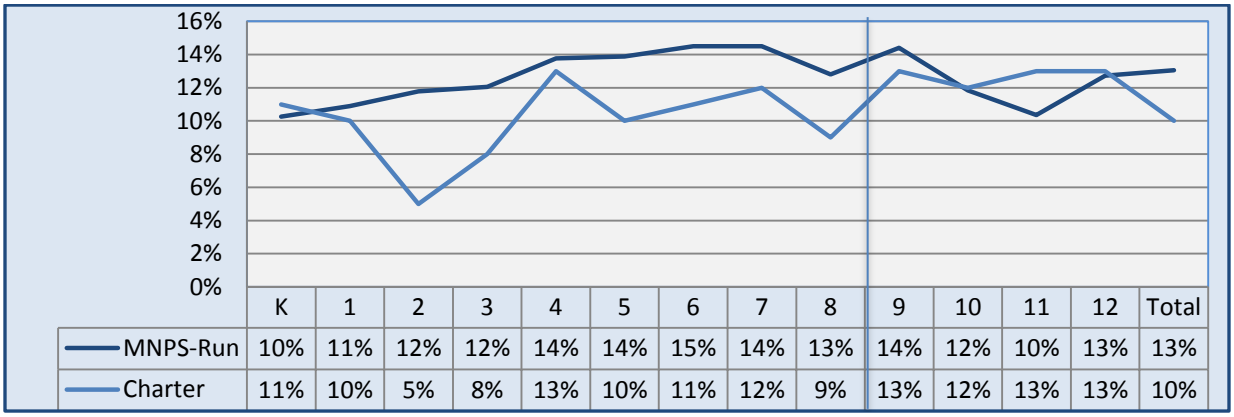


Exhibit D-4. Percentage of Students by Disability Category in MNPS-Run/Charter Schools, State, and Nation



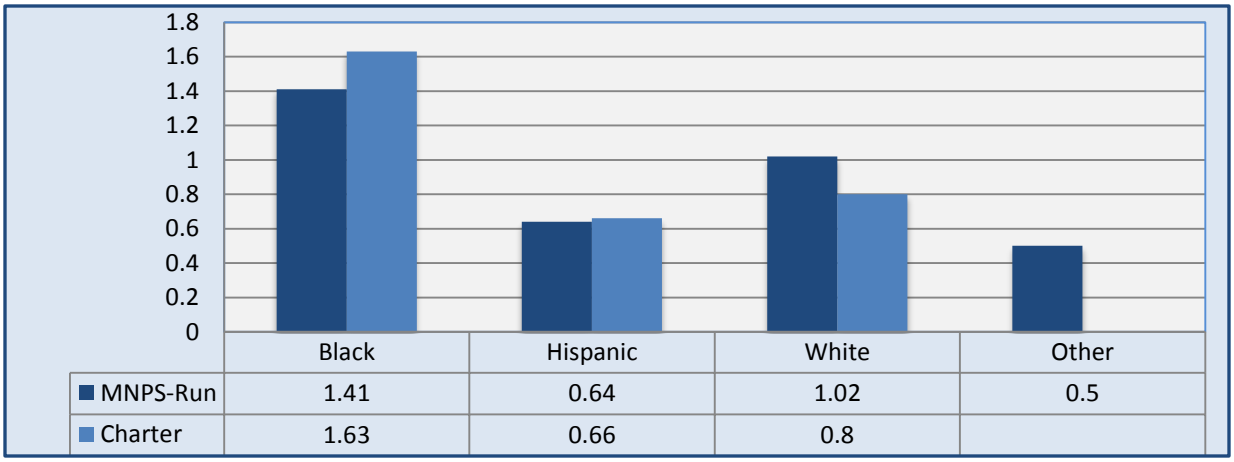
	SLD	S/L	OHI	Autism	ED	ID	DD	Other
MNPS-Run and Charter	27%	21%	15%	9%	6%	7%	6%	8%
Shelby County	44%	14%	11%	6%	3%	10%	9%	3%
State	41%	23%	13%	6%	3%	6%	6%	2%
Nation	40%	14%	13%	8%	6%	7%	8%	4%

Exhibit D-5. Percentages of MNPS Students with IEPs by Grade in District Run and Charter Schools



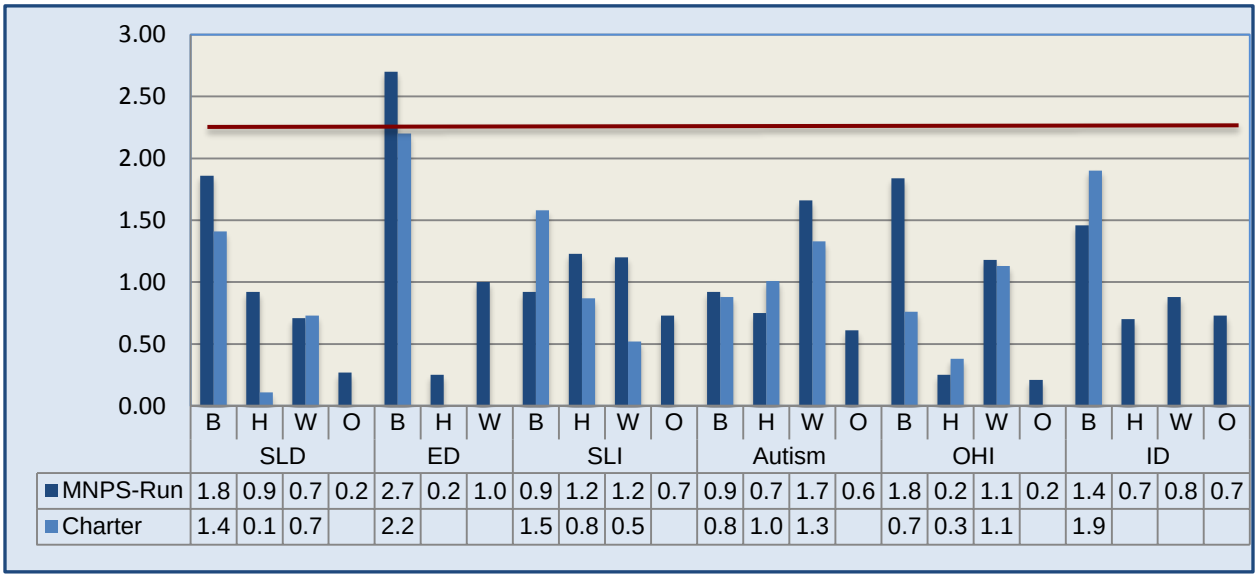
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
MNPS-Run	10%	11%	12%	12%	14%	14%	15%	14%	13%	14%	12%	10%	13%	13%
Charter	11%	10%	5%	8%	13%	10%	11%	12%	9%	13%	12%	13%	13%	10%

Exhibit D-6. Risk Ratios by Race for All Students with IEPs in District Run and Charter Schools



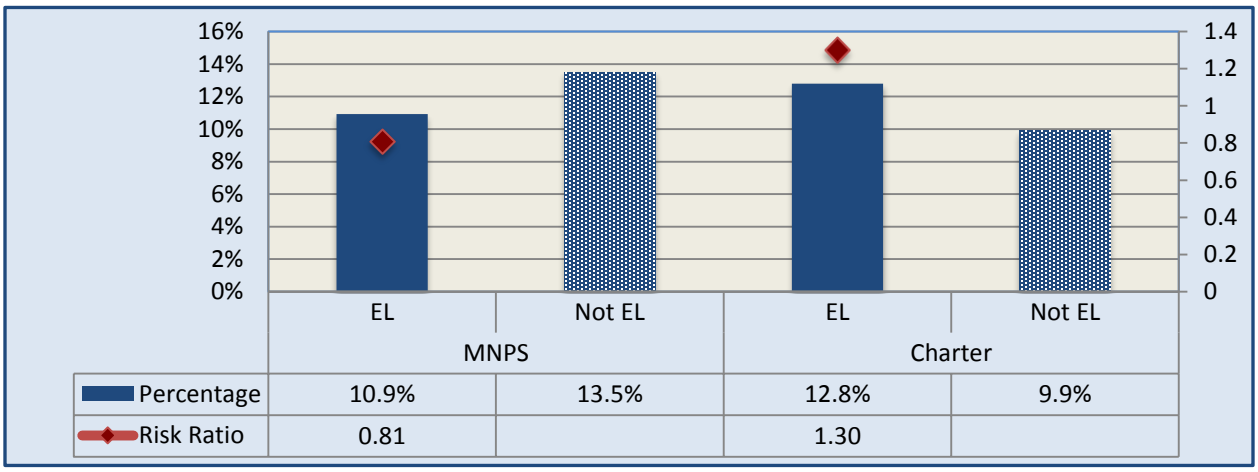
	Black	Hispanic	White	Other
MNPS-Run	1.41	0.64	1.02	0.5
Charter	1.63	0.66	0.8	

Exhibit D-7. Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity by Major Disability Area



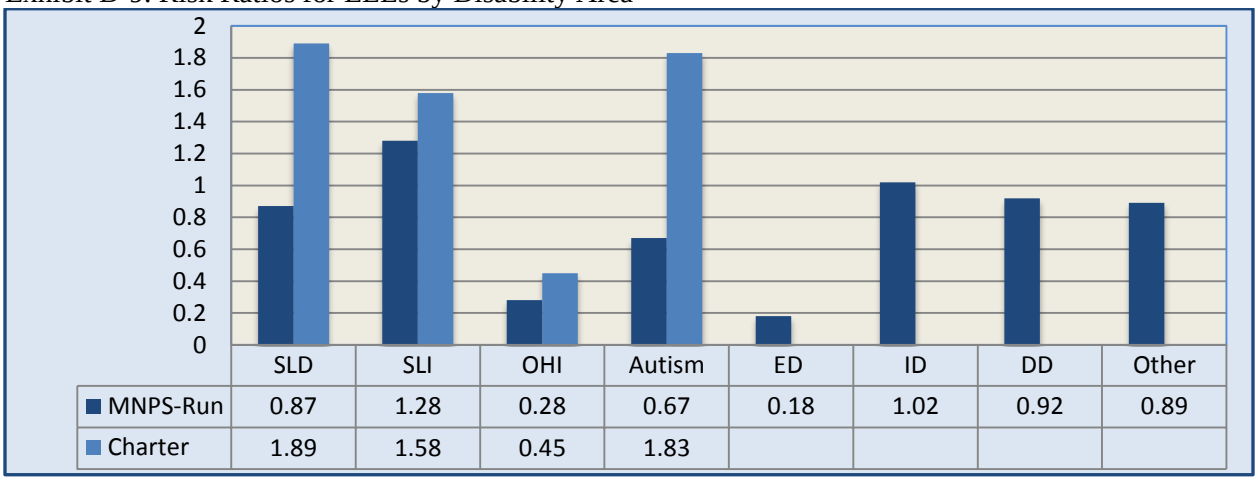
	B	H	W	O	B	H	W	B	H	W	O	B	H	W	O	B	H	W	O	B	H	W	O
	SLD				ED			SLI				Autism				OHI				ID			
MNPS-Run	1.8	0.9	0.7	0.2	2.7	0.2	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.2	0.7	0.9	0.7	1.7	0.6	1.8	0.2	1.1	0.2	1.4	0.7	0.8	0.7
Charter	1.4	0.1	0.7		2.2			1.5	0.8	0.5		0.8	1.0	1.3		0.7	0.3	1.1		1.9			

Exhibit D-8. Percentage of ELL and Non-ELL Students with IEPs and Corresponding Risk Ratios



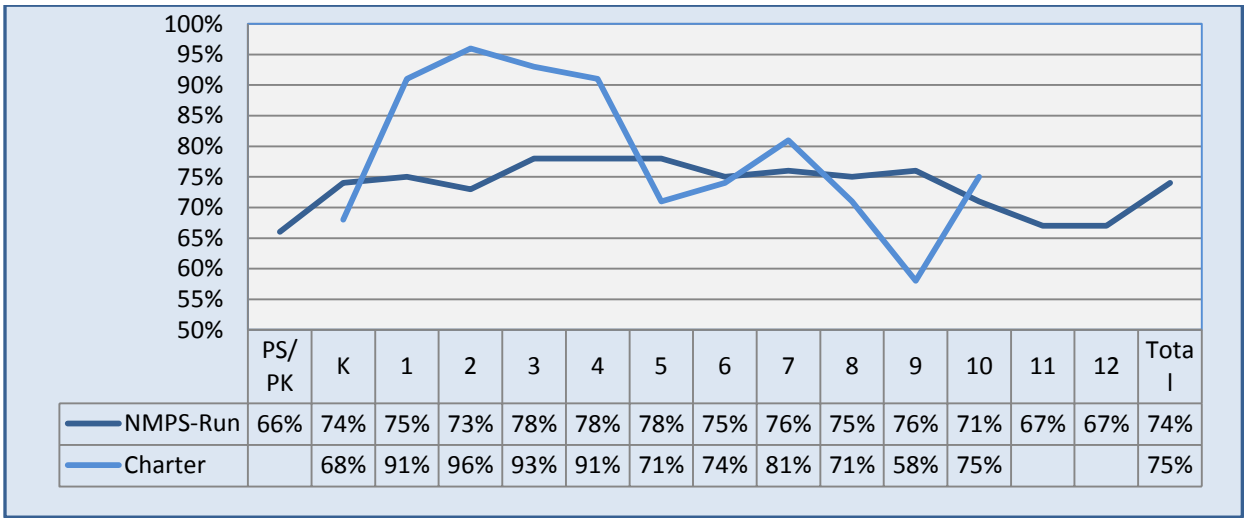
	EL	Not EL	EL	Not EL
	MNPS		Charter	
Percentage	10.9%	13.5%	12.8%	9.9%
Risk Ratio	0.81		1.30	

Exhibit D-9. Risk Ratios for ELLs by Disability Area



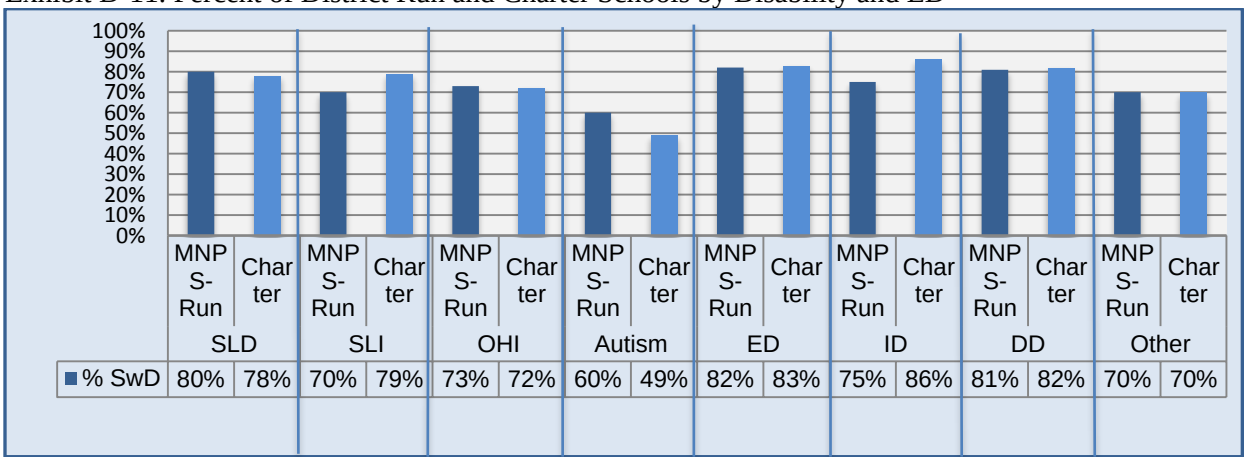
	SLD	SLI	OHI	Autism	ED	ID	DD	Other
MNPS-Run	0.87	1.28	0.28	0.67	0.18	1.02	0.92	0.89
Charter	1.89	1.58	0.45	1.83				

Exhibit D-10. Percentages of District Run and Charter School Economically Disadvantaged Students with IEPs



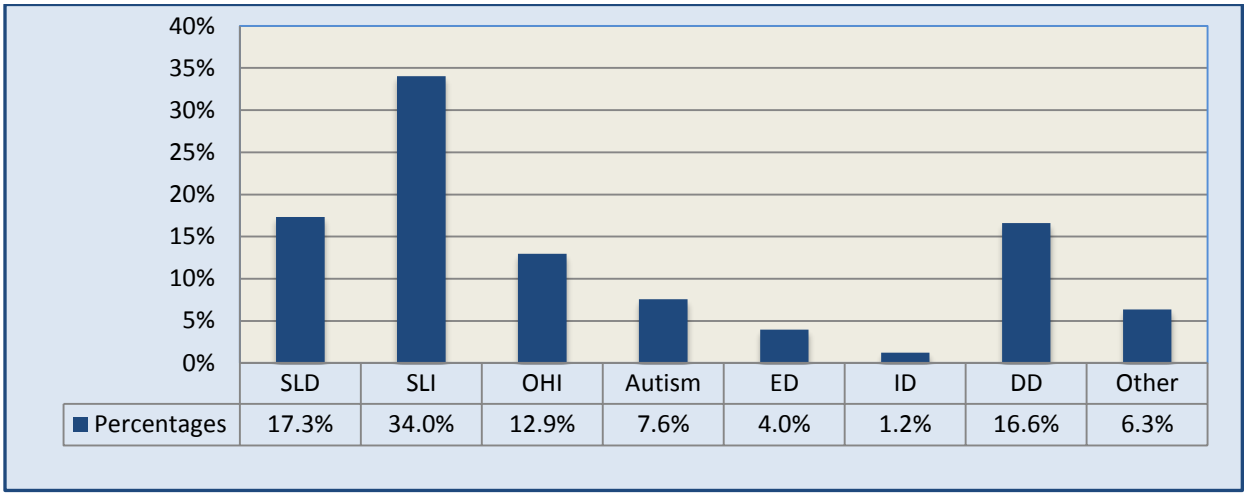
	PS/ PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
NMPS-Run	66%	74%	75%	73%	78%	78%	78%	75%	76%	75%	76%	71%	67%	67%	74%
Charter		68%	91%	96%	93%	91%	71%	74%	81%	71%	58%	75%			75%

Exhibit D-11. Percent of District Run and Charter Schools by Disability and ED



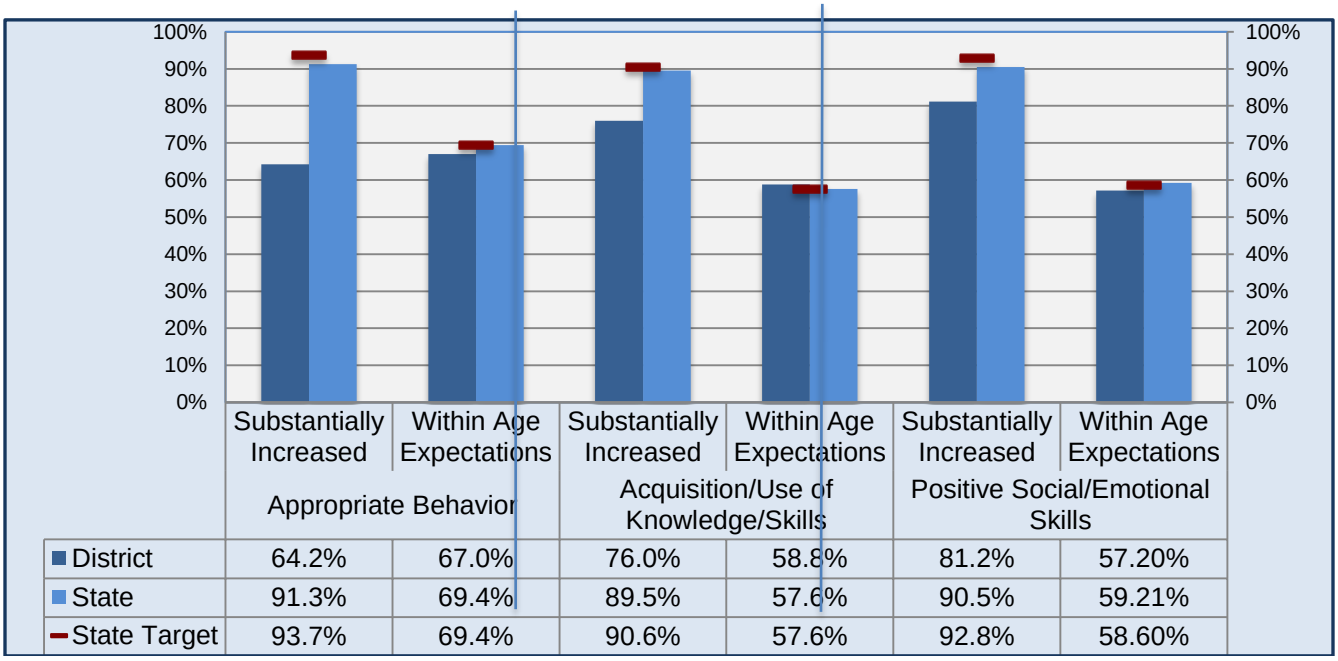
	SLD		SLI		OHI		Autism		ED		ID		DD		Other	
	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter	MNPS-Run	Charter
% SwD	80%	78%	70%	79%	73%	72%	60%	49%	82%	83%	75%	86%	81%	82%	70%	70%

Exhibit D-12. Percentage of Students by Disability Area for MNPS-Run/Charter, State and Nation



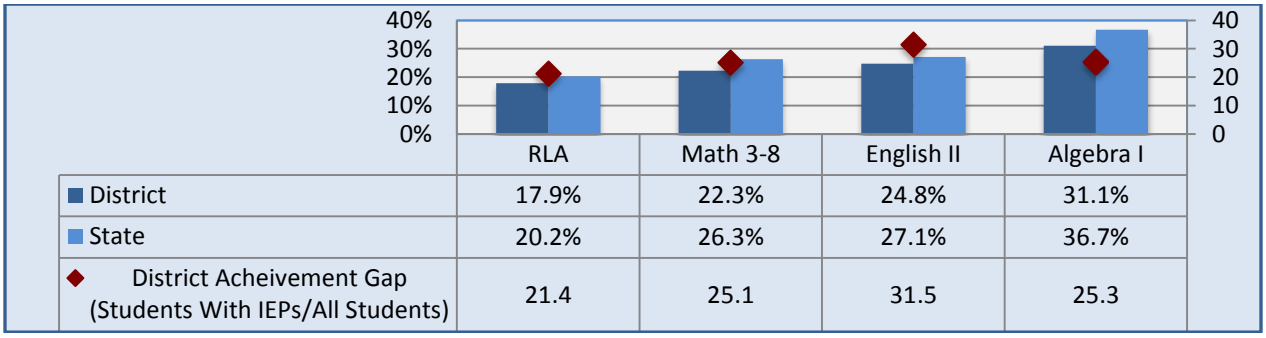
	SLD	SLI	OHI	Autism	ED	ID	DD	Other
Percentages	17.3%	34.0%	12.9%	7.6%	4.0%	1.2%	16.6%	6.3%

Exhibit D-13. Achievement Outcomes for Children with IEPs Three to Five Years of Age



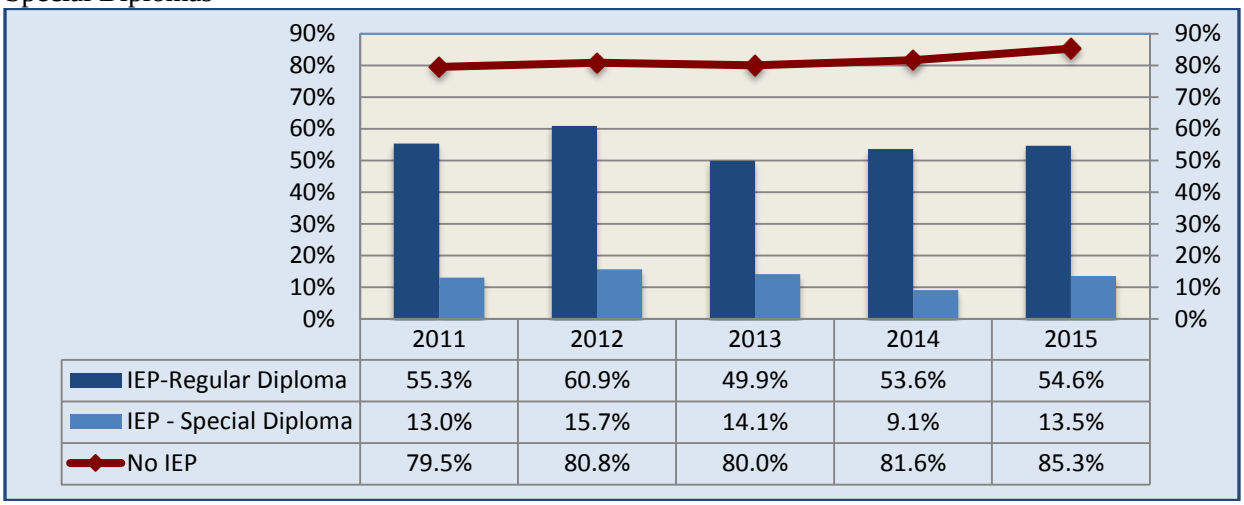
	Appropriate Behavior		Acquisition/Use of Knowledge/Skills		Positive Social/Emotional Skills	
	Substantially Increased	Within Age Expectations	Substantially Increased	Within Age Expectations	Substantially Increased	Within Age Expectations
District	64.2%	67.0%	76.0%	58.8%	81.2%	57.20%
State	91.3%	69.4%	89.5%	57.6%	90.5%	59.21%
State Target	93.7%	69.4%	90.6%	57.6%	92.8%	58.60%

Exhibit D-14. Proficient and Above Rates for Students with IEPs and Achievement Gaps with Students without IEPs on Statewide Assessments



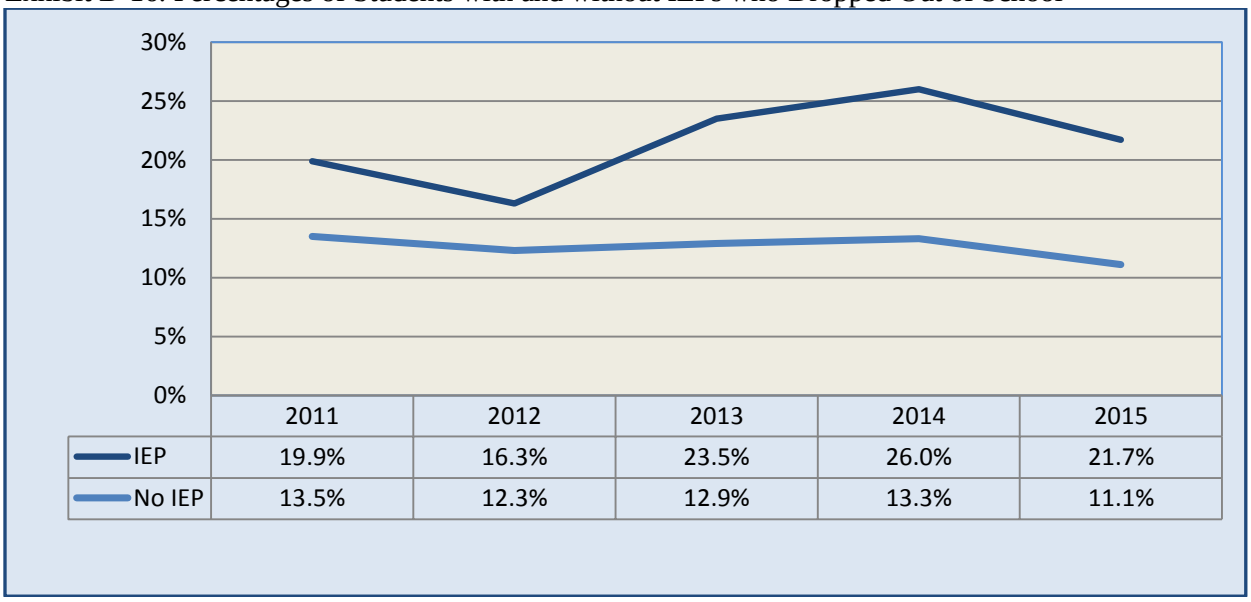
	RLA	Math 3-8	English II	Algebra I
District	17.9%	22.3%	24.8%	31.1%
State	20.2%	26.3%	27.1%	36.7%
District Acheivement Gap (Students With IEPs/All Students)	21.4	25.1	31.5	25.3

Exhibit D-15. Percentages of Students With and Without IEPs Graduating with Regular or Special Diplomas



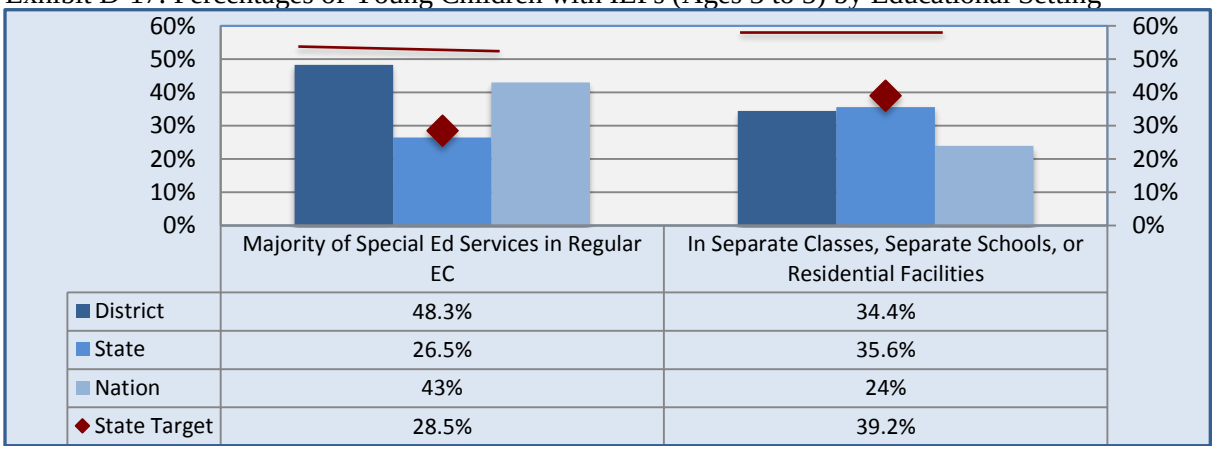
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
IEP-Regular Diploma	55.3%	60.9%	49.9%	53.6%	54.6%
IEP - Special Diploma	13.0%	15.7%	14.1%	9.1%	13.5%
No IEP	79.5%	80.8%	80.0%	81.6%	85.3%

Exhibit D-16. Percentages of Students with and without IEPs who Dropped Out of School



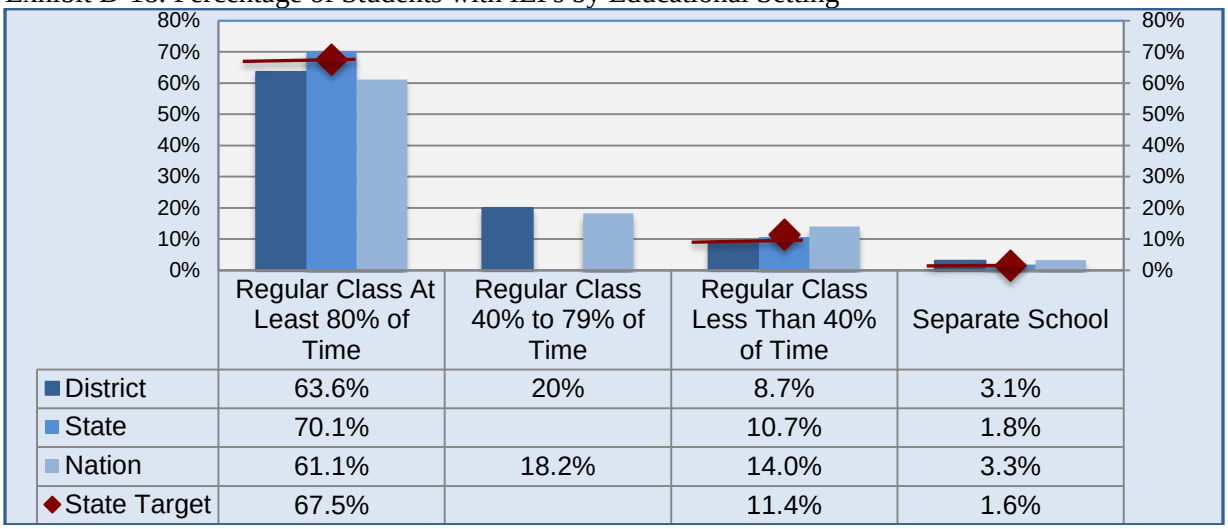
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
IEP	19.9%	16.3%	23.5%	26.0%	21.7%
No IEP	13.5%	12.3%	12.9%	13.3%	11.1%

Exhibit D-17. Percentages of Young Children with IEPs (Ages 3 to 5) by Educational Setting



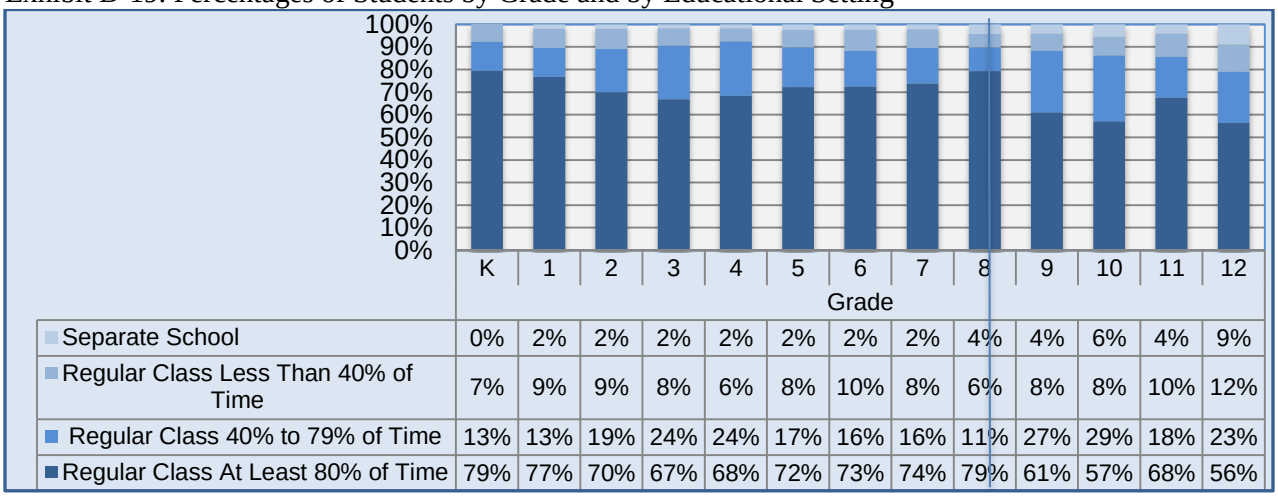
	Majority of Special Ed Services in Regular EC	In Separate Classes, Separate Schools, or Residential Facilities
District	48.3%	34.4%
State	26.5%	35.6%
Nation	43%	24%
State Target	28.5%	39.2%

Exhibit D-18. Percentage of Students with IEPs by Educational Setting



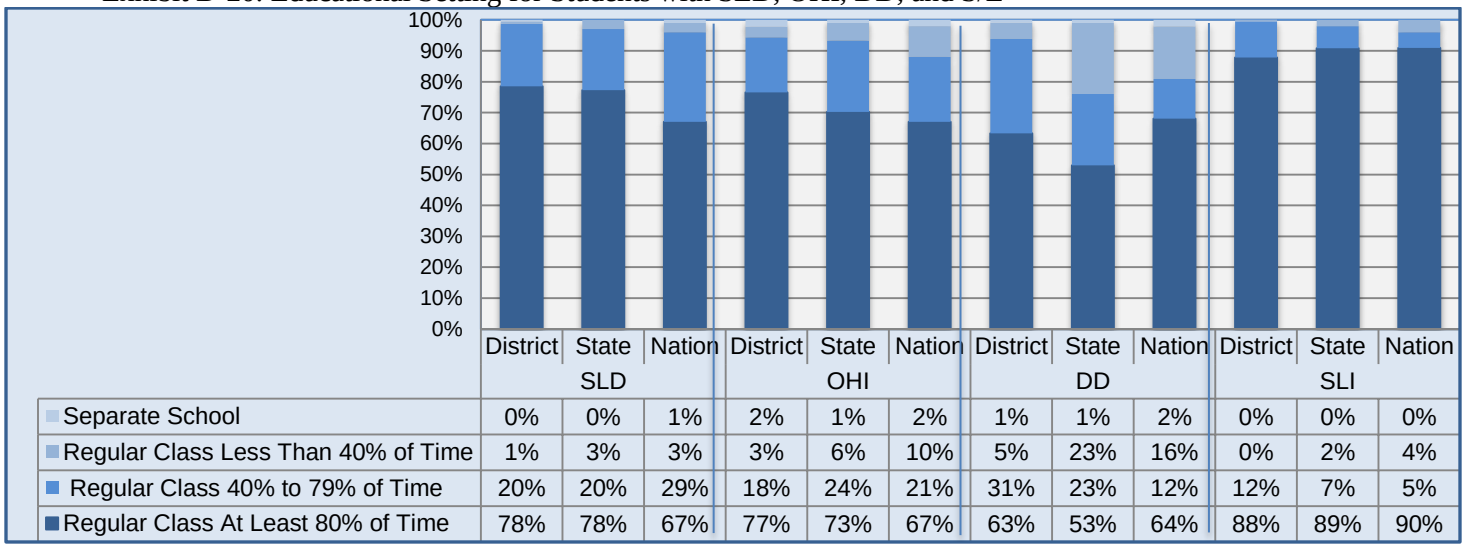
	Regular Class At Least 80% of Time	Regular Class 40% to 79% of Time	Regular Class Less Than 40% of Time	Separate School
District	63.6%	20%	8.7%	3.1%
State	70.1%		10.7%	1.8%
Nation	61.1%	18.2%	14.0%	3.3%
State Target	67.5%		11.4%	1.6%

Exhibit D-19. Percentages of Students by Grade and by Educational Setting



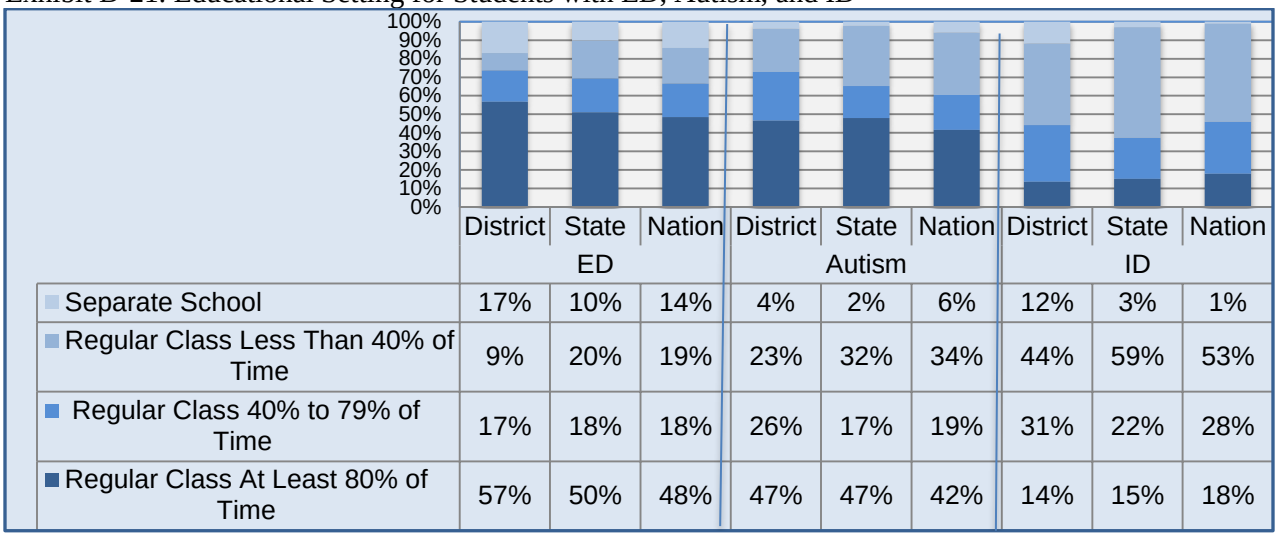
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Separate School	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	6%	4%	9%
Regular Class Less Than 40% of Time	7%	9%	9%	8%	6%	8%	10%	8%	6%	8%	8%	10%	12%
Regular Class 40% to 79% of Time	13%	13%	19%	24%	24%	17%	16%	16%	11%	27%	29%	18%	23%
Regular Class At Least 80% of Time	79%	77%	70%	67%	68%	72%	73%	74%	79%	61%	57%	68%	56%

Exhibit D-20. Educational Setting for Students with SLD, OHI, DD, and S/L



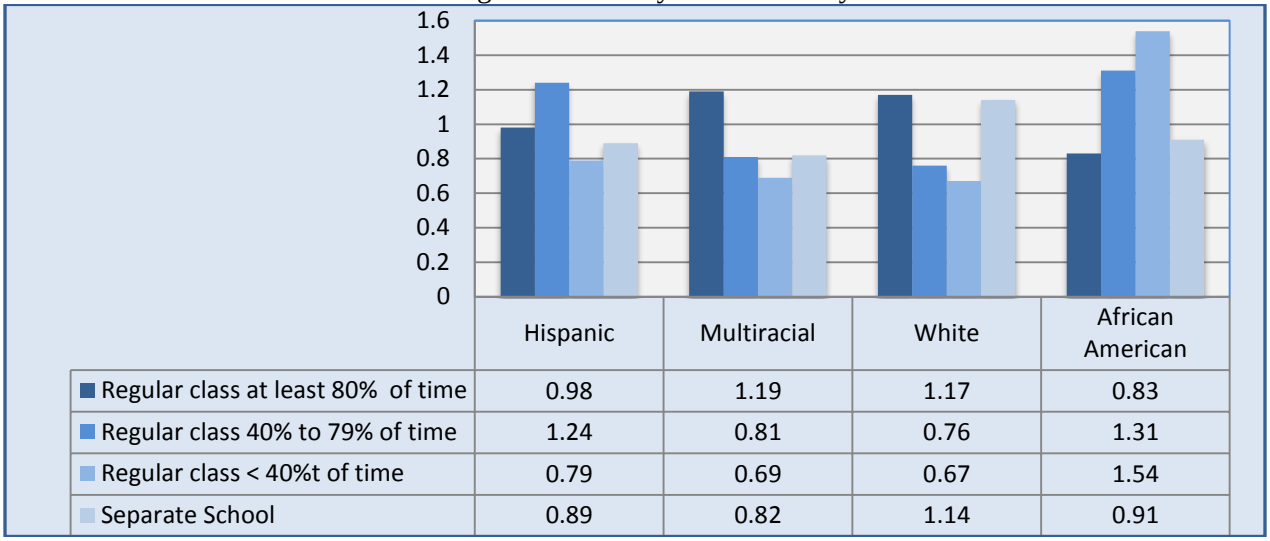
	SLD			OHI			DD			SLI		
	District	State	Nation	District	State	Nation	District	State	Nation	District	State	Nation
Separate School	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Regular Class Less Than 40% of Time	1%	3%	3%	3%	6%	10%	5%	23%	16%	0%	2%	4%
Regular Class 40% to 79% of Time	20%	20%	29%	18%	24%	21%	31%	23%	12%	12%	7%	5%
Regular Class At Least 80% of Time	78%	78%	67%	77%	73%	67%	63%	53%	64%	88%	89%	90%

Exhibit D-21. Educational Setting for Students with ED, Autism, and ID



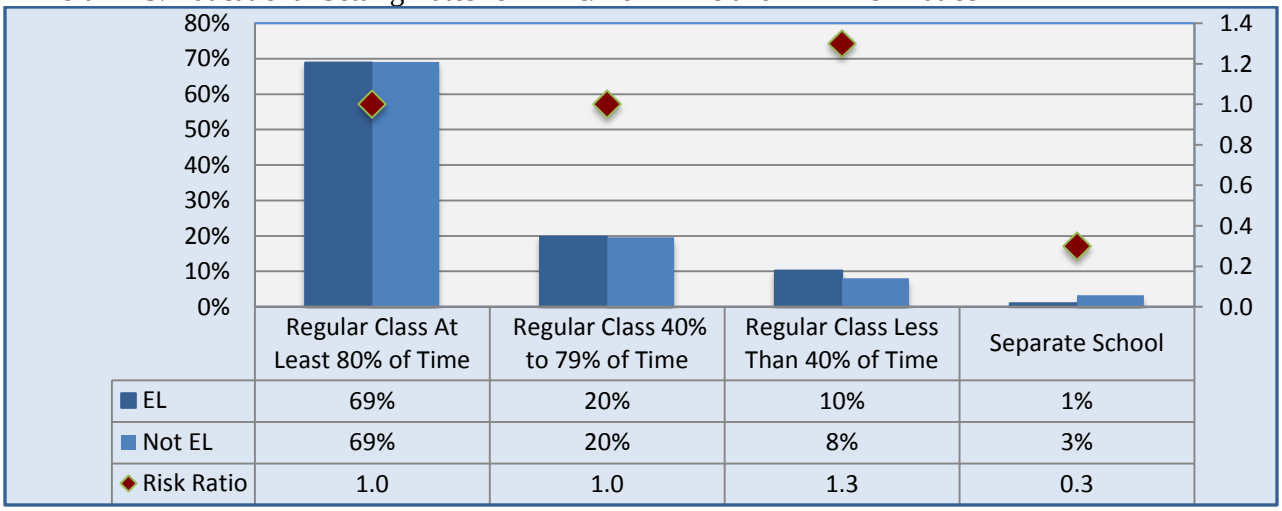
	ED			Autism			ID		
	District	State	Nation	District	State	Nation	District	State	Nation
Separate School	17%	10%	14%	4%	2%	6%	12%	3%	1%
Regular Class Less Than 40% of Time	9%	20%	19%	23%	32%	34%	44%	59%	53%
Regular Class 40% to 79% of Time	17%	18%	18%	26%	17%	19%	31%	22%	28%
Regular Class At Least 80% of Time	57%	50%	48%	47%	47%	42%	14%	15%	18%

Exhibit D-22. MNPS Educational Setting Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity



	Hispanic	Multiracial	White	African American
Regular class at least 80% of time	0.98	1.19	1.17	0.83
Regular class 40% to 79% of time	1.24	0.81	0.76	1.31
Regular class < 40%t of time	0.79	0.69	0.67	1.54
Separate School	0.89	0.82	1.14	0.91

Exhibit D-23. Educational Setting Rates for ELLs/Non-ELLs and ELL Risk Ratios



	Regular Class At Least 80% of Time	Regular Class 40% to 79% of Time	Regular Class Less Than 40% of Time	Separate School
EL	69%	20%	10%	1%
Not EL	69%	20%	8%	3%
Risk Ratio	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.3

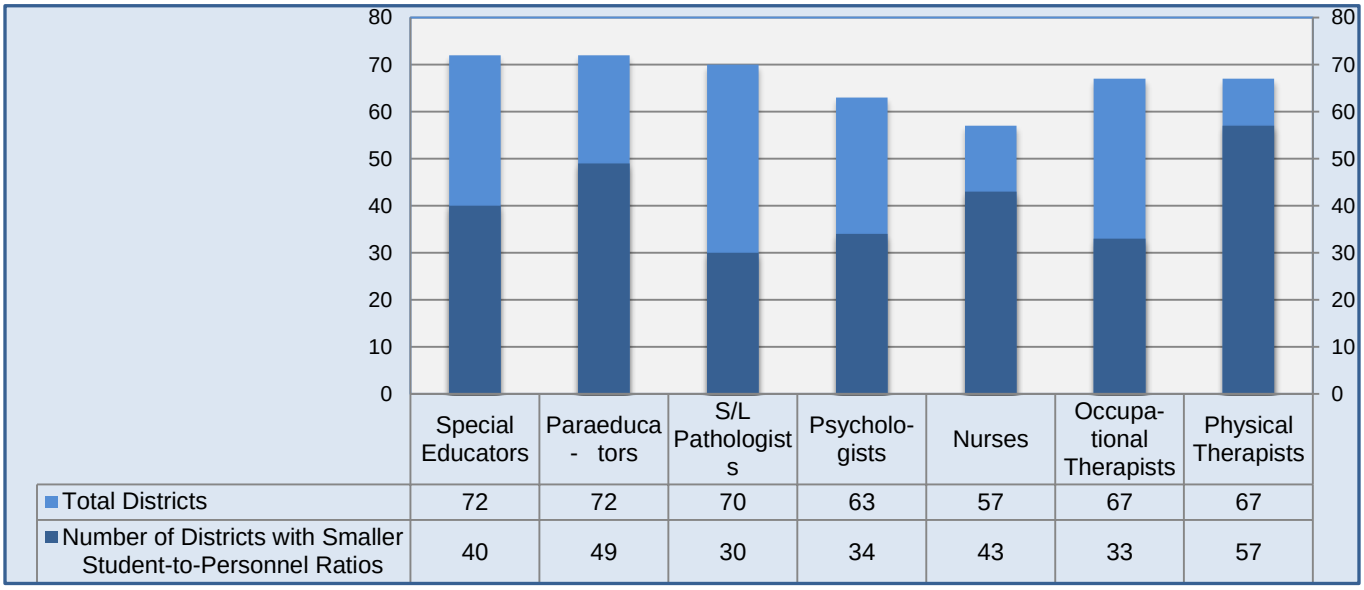
Exhibit D-24. Average Number of Students for Each Special Educator

Areas of Comparison	Special Education Teachers	Para-educator
Number of MNPS Staff FTE	680.5	594
MNPS Student w/IEP-to-Staff Ratios	14.9:1	17.1:1
All District Average Ratios	14.5:1	15:1
Range of All District Ratios	7–37:1	5.26–56:1
MNPS Ranking Among Districts[12]	**41st of 71 districts**	**50th of 71 districts**

Exhibit D-25. Ratios of Students with IEPs to Staff for Related-Services Providers

Related-Services Areas	Speech/Language	Psychologists	Nurses	OTs	PTs
Number of MNPS Staff FTE	**109**	**65.5**	**57**	**29.5**	**6**
MNPS Students w/IEPs-to-Staff	**93:1**	**155:1**	**178:1**	**344:1**	**1690:1**
All District Average Ratio	**118:1**	**173:1**	**153:1**	**371:1**	**1001:1**
Range of All District Ratios	**26–596:1**	**31–376:1**	**58-834:1**	**64–1685:1**	**128–2941:1**
MNPS Ranking	**31st of 70**	**35th of 63**	**21st of 57**	**34th of 67**	**58th of 67**

Exhibit D-26. Ranking and Number of District Survey Respondents



[12] Ranking begins with districts having a low average number of students to one staff person.

Appendix E. Student Achievement Transition Team Process

Individuals Interviewed

- Monique Felder, Chief Academic Officer
- Kevin Armstrong, Executive Principal
- Mark Pottman, Executive Principal
- Shelly Dunaway, Executive Principal
- Carl Carter, Executive Principal
- Mathew Portell, Executive Principal
- Erin Anderson, Executive Principal
- Matt Nelson, Gifted and Talented
- Julie McCargar, Federal Programs
- Anna Shepherd, School Board Vice Chair
- Sito Narcisse, Chief of Schools
- Kevin Stacey, Director of ELL Programs
- Deb McAdams, Director of Special Education
- Tamara Lipsey, Director of Literacy
- David Williams, Interim Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Sharon Gentry, School Board Chair
- Thomas Cash, Teacher, Hume Fogg
- Mikael Reed, Teacher, Creswell
- Jerri Simon, Teacher, McGarock High School
- Kimberly Williamson, Teacher, John Early
- Jane Walling, Teacher, Cole Elementary School
- Alethea Gurabardhi, Teacher, Caldwell/Kirkpatrick Elementary School
- Marlowe Brant, Teacher, Glencliff High School
- Susan Norwood, Teacher, McGavock High School
- Kimberly Fields, Teacher, Needys Bend Middle School
- Carrol Trusty, Antioch High School

Materials Reviewed

- Nashville Public Education Foundation, June 2015, *Picking Up the Pace: Building the Schools that Can Propel Nashville's Prosperity*.
- Tennessee Department of Education, February 2016. *Setting the Foundation: A Report on Elementary Grades Reading in Tennessee*.
- Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, July 25, 2016. Student Achievement Trends.
- School Board Agenda Minutes, December 2015 to June 2016
- District Assessment Calendar
- Sample Benchmark Tests (2015-16) English Language Arts and Math, Grades 3 & 7
- MNPS Academic Performance Framework, K-8 and High School
- Academic Performance Framework: Executive Summary, 9/30/2015
- Forward Focus: A News Bulletin for Employees of Metro Nashville Public Schools
- School Director Evaluation Rubric
- School Board Calendar
- Balanced Literacy Framework
- Division of Teaching and Learning Professional Learning Opportunities
- 2015-16 Annual Diversity Report
- Report of Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education, December 1, 2015
- Directions for Navigating the 'Education 2018 Goals-Strategies-Objectives Dashboard'
- Office of Teaching & Learning: Presentation to the Transition Team's Student Achievement Sub-committee, July 25, 2016
- Summary of Successes and Goals: Academies of Nashville and Career & Technical Education
- Support Services Presentation, July 25, 2016
- Vision; To Succeed We Must; We Believe Statement of the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
- Advanced Academies Presentation, July 25, 2016
- Grade 3 ELA Quarter 1 Scope and Sequence Working Document (Updated 06/2016)
- Grade 3 Mathematics Unit 1 Scope and Sequence (Updated 06/01/2016)
- Grade 7 Mathematics Unit 1 Scope and Sequence (Updated 6/1/2016)
- MNPS Scope and Sequence 2015-17
- MNPS Year at a Glance 2016-17: English Language Arts, 7th Grade, Quarter 1
- MNPS Year at a Glance 2016-17: World History and Geography, 7th Grade
- 2016-17 Mathematics/Grade 3 MNPS Year-at-a-Glance
- 2016-17 Mathematics/Grade 7 MNPS Year-at-a-Glance
- Social Studies Year-at-a-Glance: 3rd Grade
- 2016-2017 Curriculum Guide for 3rd Grade Science
- Office of Teaching and Learning—Department of Exceptional Education: Participation Data by Race/Ethnicity (Report Date 12/01/2015)
- MNPS Pacing Guide: 7th Grade Science, Major Topics
- 7th Grade Science, 1st Nine Weeks, Instructional Guide
- Pre-Kindergarten Program

- MNPS Learning Technology & Library Services
- Office of Federal Programs & Grants: School Improvement Strategy Division
- MNPS English Learners Overview
- MNPS Office of English Learners: EL Curriculum Supports
- Effective EL Instruction and Coaching to Improve EL Student Achievement
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: Head Middle School
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: East Nashville School
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016, Martin Luther King Jr. School
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: Intrepid College Preparatory School
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: Napier Elementary School
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: Pearl-Cohn High School
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: Smithson Craighead Academy
- School Improvement Plan, FY 2016: Lockeland Elementary School
- Nashville Teachers Cabinet Feedback for Transition Team
- MNPS Listen and Learn Themes Report
- ELL Information and Registration Requirements
- Home Language Surveys
- Process to identify NELB vs. EL
- Assessment
- W-APT cut scores for ELLs
- ELL Placement Cards
- SIFE Registration
- Potential SIFE Screener
- Native Language Reading Test Description
- Native Language Assessment Copy
- Parent Notification including (including SIFE)
- ELL Program Opt Out
- ELL Waivers
- Sample email to Principal
- ELL Service Model Documents
- MNPS ELL High School Progression Plan
- Elementary ELD Sheltered Planning Template
- ELD Focus Time Planning Template
- Secondary Balanced Literacy Weekly Lesson Plan for ELLs
- WIDA Performance Definitions: Speaking and Writing
- WIDA SIOP Lesson Plan
- Blank MPI Template
- Elements of an MPI
- WIDA Speaking Test Scoring Rubric
- WIDA Speaking and Writing Rubric
- WIDA Supports
- SIFE Program Definition Qualifications
- ELL Program Growth: Schools and Teaching Staff
- SIFE Contact List

- SIFE Graduate
- ELL PD Calendar with Dates
- Principal Handout Booklet
- Letter to exiting ELL students' families
- ELL Monitoring forms
- How to Request ELL Service
- McConnell, Jones, Lanier, and Murphy LLP (2015). Operational and Performance Audit of the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Achievement Transition Team Members

- Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools
- Candice McQueen, Tennessee Commissioner of Education
- Dale Farran, Associate Director of Peabody Research Institute
- John Morgan, Former Chancellor of Tennessee Board of Regents
- Jared Amato, English teacher, Maplewood high School
- Roser Salavert, ELL Specialist, New York City Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network, Fordham University
- Kim Statham, Deputy Superintendent, Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools
- Steve Turner, Turner Foundation
- Michael Carter, Pinnacle LLC
- Milton Johnson, CEO of HCA
- Dorsey Hopson, Superintendent, Shelby County Public Schools
- Robbin Wall, Principal, McGavock High School
- Kristin McGraner, STEM Prep
- Betty Morgan, Former Superintendent of Washington County (MD) Public Schools

Achievement Transition Team Meeting Dates

- July 11 at Nashville Public Education
- July 25 at Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
- August 23, Conference call with three subcommittees
- August 26 at Lipscomb University
- September 21, Conference call with Achievement team
- September 26, Full Transition Team
- November 14, Full Transition Team