



Children First!

News & Information from Metro Nashville Public Schools

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Glenciff Freshman Academy Gives Students a Voice

During the 2007-2008 school year, several MNPS comprehensive high schools launched Freshman Academies, part of the high school redesign initiative based on small learning communities. The schools have seen a tremendous impact from the academies, from better student performance to a greater sense of school pride, loyalty and student leadership. Anecdotal information provided by teachers, students, principals, and other faculty also indicates significant academic improvements, and we are eagerly awaiting the state test scores.

At **Glenciff High School**, a few highlights of the inaugural Freshman Academy include:

- an increase in school ownership and leadership among the freshman class – for example the school newspaper (typically run by upper classmen) was run entirely by freshmen;
- the creation of a Student Ambassador program;
- a decrease in disciplinary issues as freshmen were kept in close proximity with one another and their teachers;
- an increase in attendance among the freshman class;
- students report feeling closer to their teachers, particularly their advisors;
- students report feeling they are pushed harder to excel by their teachers;
- students feel as though they have a voice thanks to the Freshman Academy and their advisors;
- students feel safer;
- students feel their teachers care more about them – again reinforcing the close relationships built through the Freshman Academy;
- parents report an increase in the number of calls home from their child's teacher or advisor; and
- other grade levels envy the closeness of the freshmen class and the extra programs and incentives offered.

In addition to changes teachers have witnessed with students, the administrators have noticed a significant change in the teachers. Teachers were allowed to choose what academy they wish to join – depending on their interests and other talents – which established a strong sense of

academy ownership. Recently, Glenclyff Freshman Academy teachers were asked what they enjoyed most about being a part of the Freshman Academy. The answer, delivered loud and clear, was teaching on a team. Through teams, the freshmen teachers were able to work together to provide students the best educational experience possible, provide support for one another and develop friendships that extend beyond the classroom. Glenclyff teachers readily gave up one personal planning period each week to meet together as a team.

This fall, Glenclyff will implement five Career & Thematic Centers: a Business and Information Technology Academy, a Health Sciences Academy, a Hospitality and Tourism Academy, a Human Services Academy, and an International Studies Academy. Through these academies, students can study a variety of specific career or thematic pathways. The Business and Information Technology Academy will offer pathways in business management and engineering technology. The Health Sciences Academy will offer pathways in diagnostic services, biotechnology research and development, and therapeutic services. The Hospitality and Tourism Academy will offer pathways in food and beverage services as well as travel and tourism. The Human Services Academy will offer pathways in early childhood education, personal care services, and counseling and mental health services. Finally, the International Studies Academy will offer pathways in political science and government as well as human resources. Students are able to choose which academy they will join and which pathway they will follow. For more information about Glenclyff's Freshman Academy or Career and Thematic Centers, contact the school at 333-5070.

Next week, Children First! will offer a special section on McGavock High School's Freshman Academy -- the successes of its first year.

Mayor's Town Hall Meeting on Special Education

Mayor Karl Dean will host a Town Hall Meeting on Special Education at East Literature Magnet School Monday, July 14, at 6 p.m. The town hall meeting follows a series of community forums hosted by the Mayor's Advisory Council on Special Education throughout May and June. Parents, teachers and other community members are encouraged to come share their ideas and concerns about special education services offered in Metro Nashville Public Schools with the Mayor.

School Board Candidates Forum

All candidates for Metro School Districts 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 were recently invited to participate in a School Board Candidates' Forum, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Nashville and Luvenia Butler (LuvRic and Company). The forum, designed to help voters make an informed choice during the August 7 elections, will be re-broadcast on Comcast Channel 19 the following dates and times:

Friday, July 11	10:00 p.m.
Saturday, July 12	10:00 p.m.
Thursday, July 17	11:00 a.m. 9:00 p.m.
Friday, July 18	10:00 p.m.
Saturday, July 19	10:00 p.m.
Thursday, July 24	11:00 a.m. 9:00 p.m.
Friday, July 25	10:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 26	10:00 p.m.
Thursday, July 31	11:00 a.m.
	9:00 p.m.
Friday, August 1	10:00 p.m.
Saturday, August 2	10:00 p.m.

Voters uncertain of their Metro School Board district can look online at <http://www.nashville.gov/vote/#> or call the Election Commission, 862-8800. School district maps can be found online at <http://mnps.org/Page1726.aspx>. Candidates for the five districts include:

District 1	Barry Barlow, Sharon Gentry, and William Mason, Jr.
District 3	Tim Coleman and Mark North
District 5	Gracie Porter
District 7	Cordenus Eddings and Ed Kindall
District 9	Paul Brenner, Alan Coverstone, Richard Haglund, Stephen Hicks, Lee Limbird, and James Lech

Napier Enhanced Option Develop Strong Community Partners

This summer, Napier Elementary Enhanced Option School developed numerous interactive partnerships and programs with the local community to promote student achievements. Students benefited from programs such as *Foster Grannies*, an organization that brought in grandparents from the local area to tutor students. Michael Ross, principal at Napier, believes that it was mutually beneficial for students and grandparents. The students were able to learn from the senior citizens' wisdom, while the grandparents were able to "adopt" students as their own grandchildren.

RECAP, another community based program sponsored by Vanderbilt, gathered volunteers to teach and discuss good behavior to Napier's 3rd graders. Likewise, Trevecca University, partnered with Napier throughout the summer through Mission Encounter which worked on building development and improvements. Finally, 50 students from McGavock High came to mentor the Pre-K students twice a week. Napier Elementary's strong community support through various supplemental programs and teaching tools allowed the students and school to grow tremendously.

Community Partners Kick Things Up a Notch at Kirkpatrick

Kirkpatrick Enhanced Option School reaped the benefits from community partnerships and donors this summer. Anonymous donors bought backpacks and school attire for every child at Kirkpatrick. In addition to such community donations, the school also relies on partnerships with organizations such as Nashville Partner Prevention, East End United Methodist, Backfield Motion and All State Insurance. For instance, All State donated \$1000 to all 4th grade classes and provided free trips to the Bell Carol Boat. These contributors help Kirkpatrick students attend class worry-free of school-related expenses.

The school plans to gain further partnerships with businesses that will provide support not just financially but also educationally through seminars on healthy eating and financial management for students and their parents. Kirkpatrick addresses such social issues not only to help their students but also to aid the overall community development and education.

Enhanced Option Schedule Change

Forty-five minutes will be added to enhanced option schools for the 2008-09 school year. These extra minutes will replace the 20 additional academic days at the end of the regular school year. Each school has new and differing ideas about how to approach and utilize this extra time. For example, Napier Elementary plans to start an academic intervention time for its students, while Caldwell will use these extra minutes for development and enrichment activities and tutorials. Buena Vista will begin an EXCEL program geared towards level specific education. Fall-Hamilton will use the added minutes to delve deeper into subjects or writing programs.

Hillsboro Student Selected to Tennessee Governor's Academy

Congratulations to Keller Hawkins for being selected to the Tennessee Governor's Academy. This is the second year of the program, only 33 students from across the state are selected, and Keller is the only MNPS student selected to participate. Next year's incoming Junior class will begin at the Tennessee Governor's Academy in Knoxville, August 10, 2008. For more information about the school, visit <http://tga.tennessee.edu>.

Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery for MNPS Freshman Academies

June 23 – 25, two teams of MNPS educators presented material at a national conference on Small Learning Communities in Las Vegas, Nevada. The teams, from Hillwood and McGavock, were selected to present by a national panel for the highly effective models of small learning communities Hillwood and McGavock have built.

Hillwood's team was led by site coach Connie Hensley and Principal Karl Lang. The team also consisted of two Freshman Academy teachers, the Freshman Academy principal, and the school's technical principal. The Hillwood presentation focused on reducing the 9th grade retention rate, what schools can do to help the students who do not make it to the 10th grade succeed the following year, and what needs to be in place to keep students from being retained.

The bulk of Hillwood's presentation centered on the school's *Red Shirt* program. *Red Shirts* are those students who had difficulty managing their freshman year – whether it be due to academic struggles, behavioral issues, or any other individual setbacks. *Red Shirts* are teamed up with a guidance counselor whose job is not just to get them to the next grade, but to help the student get on track academically, emotionally, culturally, or socially. *Red Shirts* meet with their assigned guidance counselors once a week to track their progress, teachers provide progress reports to the guidance counselors on each *Red Shirt*, and students work in small groups with other students facing similar challenges to correct their personal setbacks. *Red Shirts* are also offered a chance for both Credit and Content Recovery, and they receive highly personal attention from school leaders to help them stay focused and get back on track. Another benefit of the *Red Shirts* program is the ability for counselors and teachers to keep much closer contact with the students' parents and offer more dynamic interventions for the students.

While Hillwood's team was leading a crowd in one conference room, a team from McGavock, led by site coach Paula Barkley, was across the hall leading a session on their use of distributive leadership, which increased the teacher voice in building the school's Freshman Academy. What this type of leadership boils down to is bottom up decision making rather than top down. Teachers at McGavock were given the leeway needed to make the decisions that would most benefit their students and the Academy. The principal allows the teachers enough autonomy to

make their own decisions, which creates a sense of Academy ownership and pride among the freshmen teachers. However, it is important to note the principal must always know about and approve the decisions and can reject a decision if he doesn't feel it is appropriate.

Both teams received tremendous excitement and praise for their presentations. Every seat was taken during Hillwood's session, with many even sitting on the floor. A national trainer, who sat in on McGavock's session, was so impressed with their model and implementation she made the comment that she wished she could take the team on the road with her. Several participants also expressed an interest in visiting McGavock to see the Freshman Academy in operation. Congratulations to both of these schools. Their professionalism, dedication and teamwork have helped create exceptional academies; ones that other schools around the nation are looking to imitate. And, as the old adage goes, "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery."

IMF Peniel Initiative Partners with Parent University

IMF Peniel Initiative has recently partnered with Metro Nashville Public Schools' Parent University to offer free training to students' parents regarding changes effective in the 2008-2009 school year. Peniel Initiative is a faith-based and clergy lead community resource center.

Peniel Initiative members are serving as instructors of Parent University to inform and educate parents regarding different facets of MNPS. Peniel will assist parents in their efforts to navigate the school system to ensure their child has the best possible experience and will educate parents on ways to ensure their child has a good education and is prepared for higher education or the workforce. The first two educational components of Parent University to be addressed are: **“The high school redesign into Small Learning Communities,”** and **“What is required to graduate from high school.”** Any resident interested in receiving a free training is encouraged to call IMF Peniel at 615.712.9763. For more information about IMF Peniel Initiative, visit their website at www.penielineinitiative.org.