



Children First!

News & Information from Metro Nashville Public Schools

July 18, 2008

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Staff Preparing for New School Year

The excitement is building throughout MNPS as staff prepare for the first day of school in less than a month. Principals and other key school personnel reported July 16 to begin preparing for teachers to report Aug. 6 and the arrival of students Aug. 11. Earlier this week, the State Department of Education and MNPS announced changes in several principal and assistant principal positions. Some changes occurred to fill vacancies caused by retirements or promotions; others were made to better match the needs of the school to the skills of its leadership team. To view a listing of these changes, please visit the MNPS website at www.mnps.org.

McGavock 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.

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

- a significant increase in students' involvement in school clubs and extracurricular activities;
- an increase in service work – examples include school grounds clean-up, homeless shelter assistance, work with nearby daycares, recycling projects, and assistance with *Room in the Inn*;
- a decrease in disciplinary issues as freshmen were kept in close proximity with one another and their teachers – only a handful of freshmen sent to the executive principal the entire school year;
- an increase in freshman support, trust and inclusion of classmates;
- parents report getting more calls from teachers;
- teachers received numerous letters from parents thanking them for caring about their children;
- almost every single teacher in the Freshman Academy asked to be brought back the following year; and
- an increase in teacher involvement at the school.

One of the most successful projects at McGavock during this past school year is a program called *Project Graduation*. McGavock teachers had been working with kids after school, tutoring and providing extra lesson support. Teachers began to realize this traditional tutoring was not working – the students actually needed help with work ethic rather than the actual academic material. Teachers started gathering children who earned a zero during the week and took them to *Project Graduation*. Here kids were pushed to work – literally sat down and made to do the school work they had been avoiding. With this new method, teachers realized not only were the students able to make up the work, but they were passing. All the kids needed was a lesson in work ethic and discipline.

Another huge success at McGavock was the use of formative assessment. The primary goal of formative assessment is to make state standards student friendly. That is, help the students understand the terminology and what exactly they are supposed to be learning. It makes the material more relevant and easier to digest. Through district workshops, teachers learned how to create homework and quizzes that are penalty free for students – and they learned how to get students to participate on these assignments even when they knew they wouldn't be graded.

One teacher noticed the bell curve shift significantly in her class. Her class went from many failing grades to almost all A's and B's, something she had never before seen happen. The reason--her students were able to explain what they didn't understand about a topic rather than just say, "I don't understand." This allowed the teacher to break down the specific trouble area and help her students gain a real understanding of the material.

This fall, McGavock will implement seven Career & Thematic Centers: **Arts and Communication Career Academy**, which will include pathways in Graphic Communications, Design Communications, Journalism and Broadcasting, and Audio Technology; a **Business Administration and Information Technology Career Academy** with pathways in Electronic Publishing, Interactive Media, Web Design, and Business Management; an **Education and Human Services Career Academy** with pathways in Family and Community, Counseling and Mental Health, Consumer Services, Personal Care, and Pre-K-Early Childhood Education; a **Government and Public Administration, Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security Career Academy** with pathways in Public/Non-Profit Management and Administration Law Enforcement Services, Security and Protective Services; a **Health Sciences, Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Career Academy** with pathways in Diagnostic Services, Support Services, Environmental and Natural Resource Systems, and Plant Systems-Turf grass/Nursery Production; a **Hospitality and Tourism Career Academy** with pathways in Food and Beverage, Hospitality Management and Lodging Services, and Travel and Tourism; a **Science, Engineering Technology, and Mathematics, Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics Career & Thematic Academy** with pathways in Engineering and Technology (FordPAS), Astronomy, Automotive Technology, Collision Repair Technology, Aviation Maintenance, Aviation Flight, and HVAC. For more information about McGavock's Freshman Academy or Career and Thematic Centers, contact the school at 885-8850.

Next week, Children First! will offer a peek at Hillwood High School's Freshman Academy -- the successes of its first year.

MTA Bus Route Changes - \$1.78, \$1.85, \$2.....

It has been too long since people have seen these numbers on gas station signs. Now it is more common to see gas at four dollars a gallon! Due to these extreme increases in prices over the past years, MTA board of directors held several meetings and public hearings in May to discuss how to continue to provide bus and AccessRide transportation for Nashville citizens. The solution for MTA is to increase fares for riders and eliminate less used routes to avoid more severe cuts in transportation service. As of July 1, bus fares increased by 25 cents and AccessRide fares are 50 cents. Also, all Night Owl Service will be discontinued, but there will be no reductions in service for people with disabilities.

Effective July 6 are new adjustments for 2- Belmont, 8- 8TH Avenue South, 6- Lebanon Rd, 14- Whites Creek, 17- 12TH Avenue South, 22- Bordeaux, 24X- Bellevue Express, 26- Gallatin Road, 28- Meridian, 35X-Rivergate Express, 44- MTA Shuttle routes, and 93- Music City Star West End Shuttle. The new adjustments for most routes have to do with arrival and departure times on school days only, as well as changes for wider coverage by each route. Changes were made to these routes to compensate for the seven eliminated routes which include 13 Sylvan Park, 31X Harpeth Valley Express, 1 Vine Hill, 45X Oak Hill Express, 16 Madison/Old Hickory, 30 McFerrin, 37X Tusculum/McMurray Express, as well as reduction of a portion of 8th Avenue South.

Flyers describing the specifics of the route changes are available at the Downtown Transit Mall information booth on Deadrick, the MTA Customer Care Office on Nestor St., the library on Church St., City Hall and other Nashville locations. New schedule changes are also posted at www.nashvillemta.com. All questions concerning this information can be answered by contacting MTA Customer Care at (615) 562-5950 between 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, and 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sundays.

Live Where You Work!

Want to live where you work? Mayor Karl Dean is making that a lot easier with the city's first Mayor's Housing Fair which will be held Saturday, Aug. 16, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. The fair will be held at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds and is designed to help boost downtown living. Guests can visit dozens of booths, speaking to professionals in all industries associated with purchasing a home (builders, bankers, loan officers, appraisers, non-profits, realtors, real estate agents, etc.). Fair-goers will be provided invaluable information regarding new homes in the Nashville area, how to obtain a mortgage, how to increase their credit score, how to maintain their first home, and much more. Guests can also attend a short presentation that will cover everything from the seven great reasons to buy a home now to steps to buying a new home. Also at the fair, guests will be eligible for a variety of prizes and giveaways -- all of which are paid for by fair sponsorships.

Helping Kids Eat Healthy

H.G. Hill Middle and Haynes Design Center are helping Metro students get healthy. The MNPS schools were recently selected as two of 25 recipients from the state of Tennessee to participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Through the program, the schools will receive approximately \$38 per student to purchase and provide fresh and dried fruits and vegetables at no charge to all children attending the schools. The grant is good from July 1, 2008 – Sept. 30, 2009.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program's (FFVP) primary goals are to create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices, to expand the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience, to increase children's fruit and vegetable consumptions, and to make a difference in children's diets to impact their present and future health. This program is an important component in combating childhood obesity and has been made a permanent program under the National School Lunch Act.