

# Children First!

News & Information from Metro Nashville Public Schools

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Aug. 10, 2007

## **An Open Letter From Dr. Garcia**

Monday morning, I had the great privilege of discussing – in a public forum at Glenclyff High School – the most recent NCLB information from the State Department of Education. I emphasize privilege because it is an honor to speak on behalf of the many incredible men and women in our schools and community who work so hard to help children.

We had much great news to share about many improvements:

- the number of MNPS schools that met the Adequate Yearly progress benchmarks increased by 10;
- the number that did not make AYP decreased by seven;
- the number of schools that entered improving categories under NCLB (from four to 12);
- in kindergarten through grade eight, every subgroup exceeded the previous year's performance in reading/language arts, with a notable decline in the achievement gap;
- a district-wide increase of nine percentage points in the number of high school students scoring at the advanced level in reading and language arts;
- four high schools – including Glenclyff – made AYP, and high school subgroups also closing the achievement gap.

I also discussed our disappointment in missing the annual escalating progress needed by our district overall. Consequently, we moved into an NCLB category called “Corrective Action.” It was heartbreaking to have made so many improvements in so many areas, and to miss the escalating NCLB targets by the slimmest of margins.

All of us take NCLB very seriously – not just for the scores or ratings – but for the measurement of our efforts in helping all children. When we get one of the many reports on progress, we celebrate our achievements (and we had many in this last report); we also look at measurements where we are not moving fast enough, and we look for ways to speed improvements.

It's difficult to name all the innovations we've put in place to speed our progress. Some of the major ones include: small learning communities, learning partnerships with local colleges and universities, additional training for teachers and the opening of a professional development center, greater involvement with community resources, new behavior specialists, registrars in high schools, more math mentors for middle schools, new instructional technologies, new reading/writing text in elementary and middle schools, a Big Picture School, decentralization of services to more closely support schools and many others.

In the upcoming year we will be working harder to involve more parents and more community members to help us shape the destinies of our students. We know the great work being done in our schools must be matched by greater involvement of parents, alumni, community leaders, businesses and many others.

I am thankful for the support our schools are receiving in the Nashville community. Mayor Purcell has been a champion for better schools; he and the Metro Council have provided tremendous support and funding.

The business community is more involved and supportive now than it has been in years. From international corporations to small businesses, we're seeing great evidence that business leaders recognize we're on the right track and doing good things. And they are eager to support us.

Community leaders, from faith-based groups to civic clubs, are becoming involved in schools again, working in many ways to boost academic progress.

We are confident our long-term strategic plan will help us accomplish this vision.

In the upcoming year, you are going to hear us talk about intentionality. We know progress isn't a matter of luck or happenstance; it only occurs when there is a deliberate effort to channel efforts to a goal. Through our Intentionality Plan,

- We are building in greater accountability for all our work.
- We are addressing new state funding expectations.
- We are continuing to work on our long-range strategic plan.
- We are increasing rigor to build NCLB progress.
- We are building stronger relationships with our community partners.
- We are ensuring relevance in everything we do.

Over the next few weeks, we'll be examining – in great detail – every element of data in the latest NCLB information. It won't sit on a shelf in the central office; it will go to every principal, where it will be used to discuss challenges in classrooms and efforts needed to help individual students. While the information is voluminous, it has relevance and importance from a district-level to the one-on-one teacher-student relationship in every school.

I appreciate your continuing support. Our district is making a great difference in many lives everyday – and that is only possible with great work both inside and out of our schools. Thank you.

Pedro E. Garcia, Ed. D.  
Director

### **The clock is ticking**

As of 2 p.m. today, the countdown clock in the central office shows school will begin in 2 days, 17 hours, 1 minutes and 55 seconds. Please remember to make sure your child gets a good night's rest and is dressed to meet the rules of the district's revised dress code policy (go to [www.mnps.org](http://www.mnps.org) and click on "Standard School Attire" if you need more information).

### **Don't miss fun-filled festival**

The Mayor's [First Day Festival](#) is Sunday, Aug. 12, 2007, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., at The Sommet Center (formerly the Nashville Arena). Mark your calendar, and plan to attend an exciting celebration of our schools, our children and our parents.

### **MNPS is first in state with Middle Years Programme**

Five Nashville public middle schools and one high school have been authorized as the first in Tennessee to offer the International Baccalaureate Organization's (IBO) Middle Years Programme (MYP), a challenging course of study designed for students ages 11-16.

The new program will be offered at Bellevue Middle, J.T. Moore Middle, Brick Church Middle, Goodlettsville Middle, Neely's Bend Middle and in Hunters Lane High School's ninth and 10th grades. Students in those MYPs will be able to advance into the existing IB Programmes at Hunters Lane, Hillsboro and Hillwood. More information is available at [www.mnps.org](http://www.mnps.org).

### **Welcome back to school**

Dozens of Metro schools are hosting back-to-school events to help students and parents prepare for the start of the 2007-08 school year.

At Goodlettsville Elementary, the newest members of their school family will gather for a Kindergarten Picnic today (Aug. 10) from 4:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Students will be introduced to their teachers and get to tour the school, while parents will also have the opportunity to make sure they have completed all the necessary forms to be ready for the first day of school.

### **Volunteer event is back on the calendar**

Undeterred by the heat, volunteers will build a new garden area adjacent to the library of Charlotte Park Elementary. Earlier this week, there were plans to postpone the event, but an enthusiastic response from the school community will keep the project on track.

The reading garden will be complete with a 12-foot by 12-foot gazebo, reading benches, and picnic tables. A rock path will lead readers through the gardens to special seating areas.

**WHO:** Charlotte Park was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Lowe's Toolbox for Education Foundation. In addition, the Lowe's store on Charlotte Pike donated \$1,200.

**WHEN:** Construction of the garden will take place Saturday, Aug. 11 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**WHERE:** Charlotte Park Elementary is located at 480 Annex Ave.