

METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund 3.0

---

Community Engagement Report  
August 2021



METRO NASHVILLE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## Situational Analysis

Metro Nashville Public Schools has been allocated approximately \$276 million in federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program that is part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

As a requirement for this third round of ESSER funding, school districts were prompted to engage stakeholders during the grant planning process, which involved gathering feedback and viewpoints in order to finalize their plans. In order to formulate a comprehensive final report for the Tennessee Department of Education, MNPS utilized engagement sessions and a public survey to gather feedback.

Feedback from a number of stakeholder groups, including teachers, school administration, parents/guardians, and community organization members, was key in guiding the direction of funding plans for the ESSER 3.0 grant.

The following report lays out the process taken by MNPS, key highlights and findings from the engagement sessions and survey responses, and next steps.

# Our Process

1. Created a simple feedback opportunity for primary and secondary stakeholders, i.e., current K–12 public school families in Davidson County, community organizations and other Davidson County residents.
2. Developed the following messaging to inform and invite key stakeholders to engage:
  - » Social media content
  - » Email content
  - » Landing page with pertinent grant information and frequently asked questions
3. Hosted seven engagement meetings to garner feedback and input regarding the ESSER plan. Groups invited to participate in the feedback process:
  - 100 Black Men of Middle Tennessee
  - African American Cultural Alliance
  - Alignment Nashville
  - Autism Tennessee
  - Backfield in Motion
  - Big Brother Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee
  - Bridges for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - CASA Nashville
  - Communities In Schools
  - Community Achieves
  - Conexión Américas
  - Cumberland River Compact
  - Disability Rights Tennessee
  - Diverse Learners Cooperative
  - Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee
  - East Nashville Hope Exchange
  - Empower TN
  - Foster Family Assistance Network
  - Friends Life Community
  - Gideon’s Army
  - Gigi’s Playhouse
  - Homework Hotline
  - Junior League of Nashville
  - Juvenile Justice Center
  - Kim Williamson & Associates
  - League of Women Voters Nashville Chapter
  - Lee Chapel AME
  - Metro Nashville Education Association
  - Metro Nashville Parents and Staff
  - Monroe Harding
  - Nashville Angels
  - Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
  - Nashville Black Chamber of Commerce
  - Nashville Organized for Action and Hope
  - Nashville PROPEL
  - Nashville Public Education Foundation
  - Nashville Teacher Residency
  - Nashville Youth for Christ
  - Northwest YMCA
  - Oasis Center
  - Office of U.S. Representative Jim Cooper
  - Office of Mayor John Cooper
  - PENCIL
  - Persist Nashville
  - Preston Taylor Ministries
  - Safe Haven
  - Salama Urban Ministries
  - SCORE
  - Stars Nashville
  - Tennessee Arts Commission
  - TennesseeCAN
  - Tennessee Disability Coalition
  - Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance
  - Tennessee Foster and Adoptive Care Association
  - Tennessee Higher Education in Prison Initiative
  - Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
  - Tennessee School Counselor Association
  - The Branch of Nashville
  - The Educators Cooperative
  - The Equity Alliance
  - The Perfect Nine
  - TN Alliance for Kids
  - TN Disability
  - TN Latin American Chamber of Commerce
  - TN STEP
  - United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee
  - United Way of Greater Nashville
  - Urban League of Middle Tennessee
  - Volunteer State Seal of Biliteracy
  - Youth Encouragement Services
  - Youth Village
4. Worked with the MNPS Research department to distribute and compile survey results to produce a final report.

# Key Highlights

At the forefront of assessing the feedback from stakeholders are MNPS' four focus areas, which intentionally align with the required Tennessee Department of Education key priorities (listed below in parentheses). Each component is essential when providing directional guidance regarding decisions that affect the district as a whole.



Build Infrastructure  
(Foundations)



Accelerate Academics  
(Academics)



Grow Our People  
(Educators)



Every Student Known  
(Student Readiness)

Internal and external sessions were held during the weeks of July 26 and Aug. 2, 2021, via a virtual platform. Social media, MNPS newsletters, curated emails, earned media and collaboration with organizations such as Nashville NOW were leveraged to raise awareness about the sessions and extend the invitation to participate.

**“I would like to see an enhanced emphasis on both literacy and trauma informed training for staff. Our kids have experienced real trauma that will directly impact their ability to learn. We’ve got to address this.”**

*–From participant on “Grow Our People” and “Every Student Known”*

## Internal Engagement Sessions

### 1. **Principal Advisory Group (33 participants)**

*Diverse cross-section of principal leaders throughout the district*

Top themes for the Principal Advisory Group are:

- » Replacing and replenishing technology
- » Drilling down on the high-dosage tutoring and how that correlates to after-school tutoring
- » Investment in additional staff support and the plan for sustaining these roles, such as the high need for translators in high-EL populations

## 2. Student Cabinet (18 participants)

*Student ambassadors at high schools throughout the district*

Top themes for the Student Cabinet are:

- » Transportation or shuttle services to enhance student experiences before/after school.
- » Increase in school counselors to enhance post-secondary support.
- » Ensure undocumented students are included in budget plans.
- » Make sure that the “basic” needs of students, particularly those without means, are being met.
- » Support plans to provide more physical activity opportunities for students, particularly for those not already engaged in sports.

## 3. Support Staff Cabinet (28 participants)

*Non-certificated staff at the school and district level who provide support for students in various capacities*

Top themes for the Support Staff Cabinet are:

- » Providing resources such as basic language skills to better equip staff to serve students
- » Emphasis that the proposed funding will be used to increase the efficacy of the current staff
- » Expanding continuing education opportunities and removing cost-prohibitive barriers
- » Leveraging funds for arts and athletics

## 4. Teacher Cabinet (41 participants)

*Teachers of the Year from all the schools in the district*

Top themes for the Teacher Cabinet are:

- » Focus on holistic MTSS, which means more personnel/partners to properly support Tier II and Tier III.
- » Graduation coach for each HS to free up counselors to better address student SEL/mental health needs.
- » Increase staffing for Exceptional Education to address high workloads of EE case managers.
- » Air purifiers in classrooms.
- » Partner with remote locations such as libraries or community centers to provide night/weekend tutoring opportunities, paying teachers for their time with ESSER 3.0.

## External Engagement Sessions

### 1. Parent Sessions (44 participants across two sessions)

Top themes for the Parent sessions are as follows:

- » Details about when and where each initiative will be implemented
- » Next steps with Metro Schools ReimaginED initiative
- » Importance of outdoor learning spaces
- » Ensuring that the funds are able to serve MNPS' most vulnerable students
- » Technological support for students

### Community Session (22 participants)

Top themes for Community session are as follows:

- » Timing of where ESSER 3.0 funds will be disbursed and how community organizations are factored in
- » Importance of translators across MNPS
- » Considerations of ongoing COVID supports for staff and students

**"I believe funds should be spent to improve the physical plant of schools, especially HVAC systems and ventilation that we know can have a big impact on reducing spread of the virus."**

*–From participant on "Building Infrastructure"*

## Online Survey

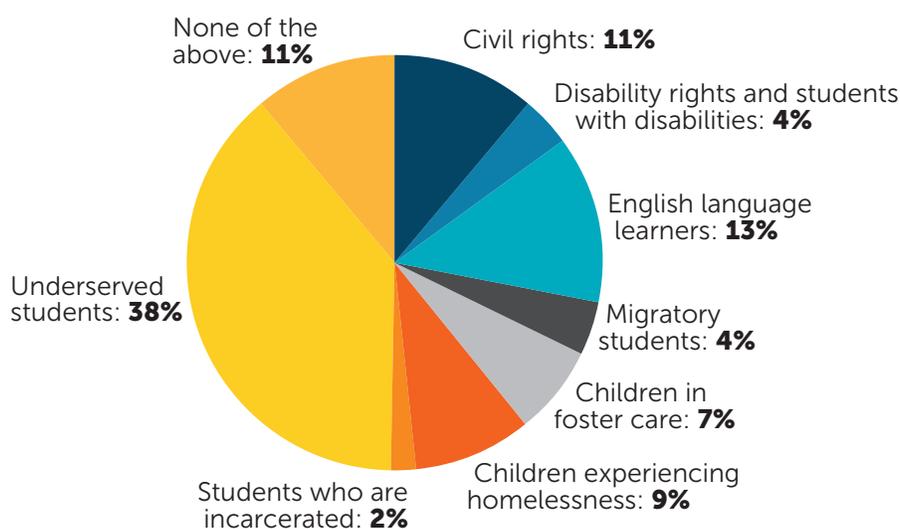
MNPS launched a survey to allow for feedback from the wider community. The survey was open for a week (Aug. 2–8, 2021) and received 160 submissions. The survey questions mimicked the questions asked in the external engagement sessions.

Demographics, including group affiliation (parent, student, elected official, community organization member, etc.), grade tier, cluster and ZIP code (optional), were also collected.

Participants were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. Those responses can be found in the appendix.

## Demographics Overview

- Those who identified as parent/guardian made up the bulk of the survey participants (53 percent).
- All grade tiers were represented, with “elementary” having the highest percentage of participants (41 percent).
- With the exception of one (Whites Creek), every cluster had representation through the survey, including magnet/alternative and charter school; 4 percent selected “unsure.”
- The following community organization groups were represented within the survey:



## Priority Overview

As part of our outreach to shareholders, MNPS sent out an email to parents and community stakeholders and survey link to targeted stakeholders, including parents, educators and support staff, community organizations, and elected officials, seeking their feedback.

Below is the text of the email, followed by the topline survey results with brief summaries of the findings:

*In response to COVID-19, the U.S. Congress passed several pieces of legislation that sent billions of dollars in resources to states. Tennessee received, in total, \$4.2 billion to be spent on schools across the state in three phases. This is known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund.*

*For the third ESSER phase, MNPS has been allotted \$276 million to help address the impact the pandemic has had – and continues to have – on our schools.*

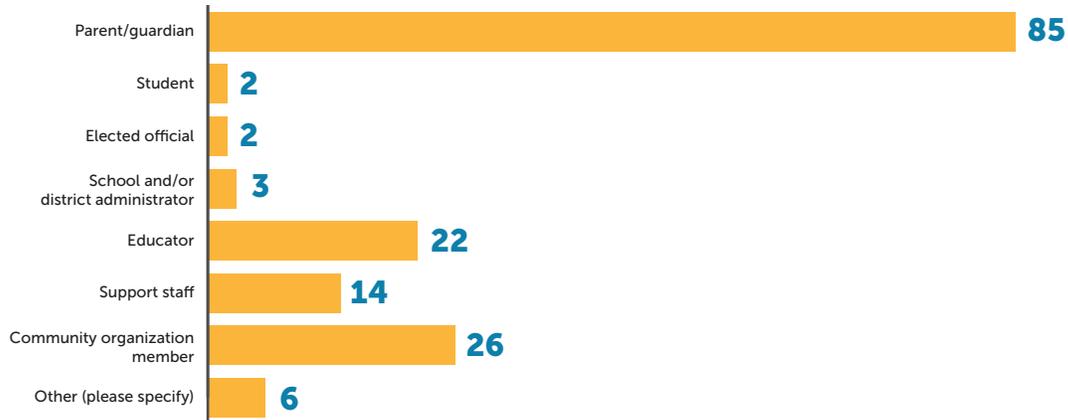
*MNPS will be presenting a plan to the Tennessee Department of Education detailing how the district plans to use ESSER 3.0 funds. We will be collecting feedback from key stakeholders to develop this plan. We need your feedback.*

*Survey responses are being collected through Sunday, Aug. 8. Thank you for sharing your valuable feedback.*

## Summary of Online Survey Results

### 1. Please select the group that best describes you:

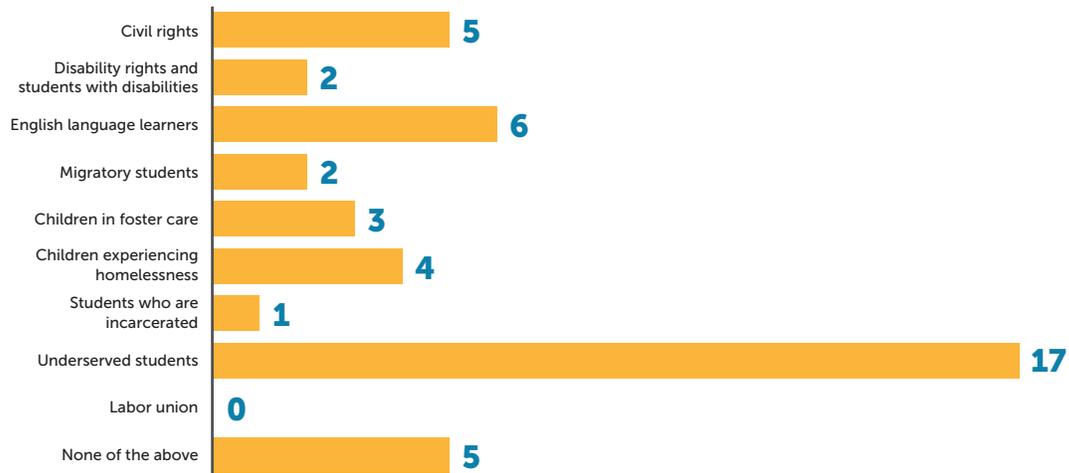
Total Responses: **160**



### 2. Does your organization represent one of the following? Select all that apply.

[This question showed up for participants only if "Community organization member" was selected on No. 1.]

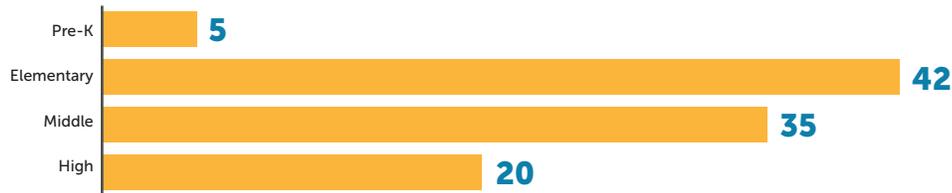
Total Responses: **45**



**3. Please select your child’s (or children’s) grade tier. Select all that apply.**

[This question showed only if “Parent/guardian” was selected on No. 1.]

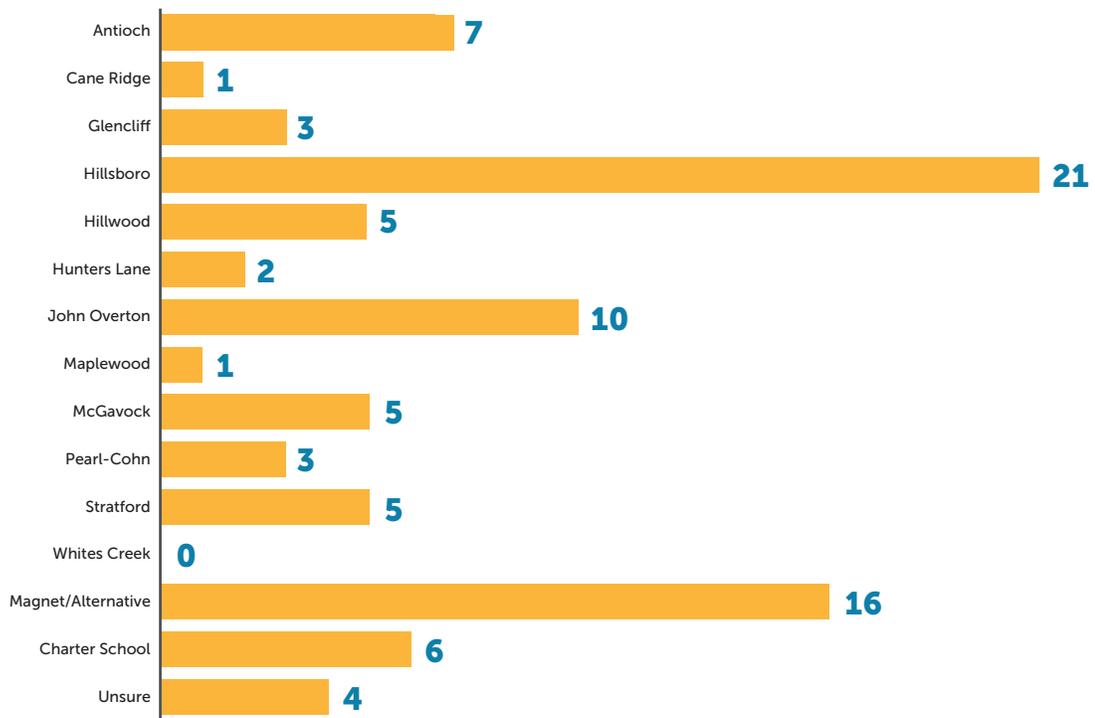
Total Responses: **102**



**4. Which cluster do they attend? Select all that apply.**

[This question showed only if “Parent/guardian” was selected on No. 1.]

Total Responses: **89**



**5. Rank your highest priorities for the ESSER 3.0 funds.**

[1 being the highest priority and 4 being the lowest priority.]



**1**  
Build Infrastructure  
(Foundations)



**2**  
Accelerate Academics  
(Academics)



**3**  
Grow Our People  
(Educators)



**4**  
Every Student Known  
(Student Readiness)

When asked to rank priorities for the ESSER funding, respondents were fairly evenly divided on the top-ranked priority. In looking at the combined top two rankings, 61% selected Every Student Known, followed by Grow People (52%), Accelerate Academics (48%) and Build Infrastructure (39%).

Total Responses: **132**

**“Please focus on community and positive culture building with some of these funds. School is about so much more than just academics.”**

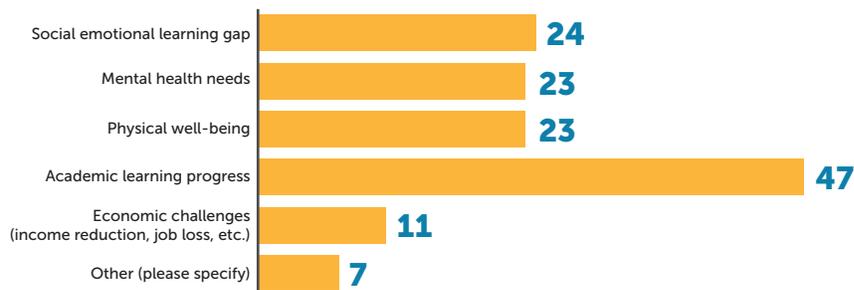
–From participant on “Every Student Known”

Priority	1	2	3	4
Build Infrastructure	21%	18%	28%	33%
Accelerate Academics	24%	24%	22%	29%
Grow People	25%	27%	33%	16%
Every Student Known	30%	31%	18%	22%

**6. What is your biggest concern for students reentering the classroom after virtual learning due to COVID-19?** [Dropdown list of choices to select only one.]

Academic learning progress was the top concern for reentering classrooms after virtual learning by a substantial margin, at 35%.

Total Responses: **133**



**7. Please rank the following strategies in order of importance for accelerating learning progress (or addressing learning loss).** [1 being most important and 7 being least important.]

Reducing classroom sizes when feasible was by far the most important factor for accelerating the learning process, with 46% ranking it as the top priority and 68% ranking it in their top three priorities.

Total Responses: **135**

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
High-Dosage Tutoring	8%	13%	19%	16%	19%	15%	10%
Summer Learning Programs	4%	5%	7%	15%	21%	22%	27%
Intervention Programs	17%	26%	16%	13%	9%	11%	9%
Extended Learning Options	8%	17%	13%	19%	17%	15%	10%
Smaller Class Sizes When Feasible	46%	12%	10%	13%	4%	5%	9%
Additional School Counselors	10%	14%	19%	10%	13%	21%	13%
Additional Social Workers	7%	13%	16%	14%	16%	11%	23%

**“Priority of funds should be given to lower income schools. Prioritize funding social workers and counselors and social emotional support staff.”**

*–From participant on “Every Student Known”*

**8. In our ESSER 2.0 plan, the district allocated \$24 million\* directly to schools to spend on the unique needs of their student population. Do you support continuing this with ESSER 3.0?**

Total Responses: **134**



\*\$75,000 provided to every school (minus charters) with an additional \$450 per economically disadvantaged student.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

Overall, stakeholders seem to be receptive to the direction that MNPS was taking with the plans for the ESSER 3.0 funds. Based on the feedback and key findings that are outlined above, the MNPS team can determine the best course of action for designing and implementing the plan. Below are some recommendations to consider as the team moves forward in this process.

- Continue the spiral funding to schools so they can utilize the funds to best serve the staff and student population.
- Emphasis on the investments that have been identified, specifically around accelerating academics and how to further grow and sustain staff.
- Continue to be transparent about the progress on how the funds are being used.

**“Distributing funds based on need will help address large inequities between schools in the district.”**

*–From participant on “Every Student Known”*

