

METRO COUNCIL AFTERSCHOOL SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Metro Council Afterschool Special Committee has been charged with assessing current afterschool programs in Nashville and making recommendations to address barriers that Nashville's afterschool programs have to serving more youth. The Afterschool Special Committee consists of 11 members including Councilmembers - Jennifer Gamble (Chair), Thom Druffel, Burkley Allen, Sandra Sepulveda, and Steve Glover, and community members - Janelle Douglas, Arthur Franklin, Susan Hanson, Berthina McKinney, Abigail Sanderson, and Lyn Hoyt.

Over the course of three months, the committee held five in-person meetings, reviewed multiple studies on the impact and importance of afterschool and summer programs for youth development, and communicated online to develop the recommendations presented. We assessed a cross section of organizations that offer and support afterschool programs including the Nashville After Zone Alliance, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Metro Parks and Recreation, Oasis Center, Opportunity NOW, Boys & Girls Club of Middle Tennessee, United Way of Middle TN, and Preston Taylor Ministries. Below is a brief summary of each organization's services.

- Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) functions as a public-private partnership between the Nashville Public Library, Metro Nashville Public Schools, the Mayor's Office, and more than 20 nonprofit organizations across Nashville. NAZA works to ensure Nashville afterschool program quality and access by providing training and support services, and funding to afterschool program service providers. A total of 13,745 youth have benefited from NAZA-funded programs, and 12,164 youth have benefited indirectly from NAZA's training of afterschool program staff since the program started in 2009.
- Metro Nashville Public Schools provides no-cost summer learning opportunities to Metro School students, serving approximately 1,200 students across the city.
- Metro Parks and Recreation provides free afterschool and summer programs focusing on physical health and wellness, and social skills and development to approximately 1,700 students (6-14 years old) per day at 10 regional and 18 neighborhood centers across the city. The program is also open all day when school is closed, providing much-needed supervision for youth who might otherwise be on their own.
- Oasis Center provides empowering opportunities for healing, hope, and growth to at-risk youth in Middle Tennessee. Programs fall within three focus areas including college & career access, crisis and residential services, and youth engagement and action. In 2018-19, they served 3,497 at-risk youth.
- Opportunity NOW offers summer employment opportunities for young people ages 14-24. In 2019, Opportunity NOW offered 24,477 positions appropriate for youth and entry level workers through partnerships with 613 employers.
- Boys & Girls Club of Middle Tennessee provides fee-based afterschool programs to youth ages 5-18 at 11 locations throughout Middle Tennessee. In 2018-19, it served approximately 4,300 youth from 43 Metro Nashville Public Schools.
- United Way of Middle Tennessee provides grants for Pre-K, afterschool, and summer programs for Middle Tennessee youth, helping to fill gaps in resources for these vital programs.

- Preston Taylor Ministries provides fee-based, Christian-focused afterschool programs for youth. In 2018-19, it served 500 students at eight church sites in the Pearl Cohn Cluster.

In communication with the Committee, these organizations shared a common theme of barriers and challenges they have to serving more of Nashville's youth, including lack of transportation, shortage of qualified staff and volunteers, lack of usable facility space, and limited funding resources. In addition, there was consensus that there needs to be more collaboration between the organizations that offer afterschool services, more studies and data-sharing to better understand supply vs. demand, and more public awareness about the programs available.

Furthermore, we learned through assessment of national studies and research, that when evaluating out-of-school time opportunities there is a vital need to include summer programs in the assessment. Afterschool service providers are often the ones to provide summer programs and these summer programs – and the lack thereof – have major community impacts as well as educational and developmental impacts for youth. According to research from the After Zone Alliance, by 6th grade, youth from middle class families have spent 4000+ more hours in afterschool and summer learning opportunities than their economically disadvantaged peers. Costs associated with program fees and transportation, as well as language barriers and other challenges, often prevent youth and families from accessing these programs.

The Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) is a large, urban school district that serves more than 86,000 children/youth in 167 schools. MNPS is the second largest district in the state of Tennessee and the 42nd largest district in the United States. The district spans 520 square miles and includes the city of Nashville as well as surrounding Davidson County. An exceptionally diverse district, enrolled children/youth represent more than 130 countries. The population of children/youth in Pre-K is 40 percent black, 28 percent Hispanic, 27 percent white, and 4 percent Asian. In addition, the majority of children/youth served by the district (66 percent) qualify as economically disadvantaged, 25 percent are English language learners, and 12 percent live with a disability.

After considerable evaluation of the common barriers impacting the accessibility of the afterschool programs that we assessed and discussion about research on the effectiveness of afterschool and summer programs overall, the committee developed the following recommendations to address common barriers to serving more youth in Nashville.

- 1. Increase operating hours at all community centers during the week and on Saturdays*
- 2. Improve transportation access for youth to afterschool and summer programs*
- 3. Transition NAZA to a Metro Government Agency/Office/Commission of Afterschool and Summer Coordination to enable NAZA to scale up its funding and support services to all afterschool and summer programs in Nashville*

Following is more information about the need, impact, and cost estimate for each recommendation as listed above.

Recommendations

1. Increase operating hours at all Metro Parks community centers during the week and on Saturdays

Thanks to research from the Wallace Foundation, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and the RAND Corporation, as well as the many practitioners and city-wide efforts that they studied, we now have more understanding than ever before about the need for access to high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities for children and youth. Research suggests that children and youth aged 6-18 only spend 20 percent of their waking hours in school. Considering that 80 percent of youths' waking hours take place outside of school, providers of informal education (afterschool and summer programs, libraries, parks, museums, athletic organizations, enrichment providers, etc.) bear a great deal of responsibility to ensure that they are intentionally applying a whole-child approach that helps cultivate the holistic development of youth.

Furthermore, research shows a positive correlation between the quality of afterschool and summer programs and those respective programs' overall impact on youth. When programs increase the quality of their instructional practices, they also increase youths' level of engagement with the programming, the youths' relationships with peers, and the caring adults who lead the programming.

For example, in analyzing attendance of youth in Nashville After Zone Alliance funded programs in 2012-2013, the American Institutes for Research made preliminary conclusions about the relationship between afterschool program attendance, program quality, and youth outcomes:

- Youth enrollment in higher quality programs was associated with fewer disciplinary incidents.
- Higher levels of afterschool program attendance were associated with fewer disciplinary incidents.
- Higher levels of afterschool program attendance (sometimes combined with youth enrollment in higher quality programming) were associated with greater improvement in math and science grades.
- High program quality and high program attendance were associated with fewer school-day tardies, a higher percentage of school days attended, and greater improvement in social studies grades.

Additionally, in 2017, Vanderbilt University's Peabody College conducted an evaluation that found that:

- NAZA youth showed better growth in school attendance relative to comparison group.
- NAZA youth showed better growth on a school discipline outcome relative to comparison group.
- Youth who participated in NAZA longer experienced better growth in TCAP scores and school attendance; demonstrated greater decreases in truancy offenses over time; and showed higher PLAN percentile scores.

Currently, Metro Parks' afterschool programs serve approximately 1,700 students (6-14 years old) per day at 18 regional and 10 neighborhood centers across the city. The program is also open all day when school is closed, providing much-needed supervision for youth who might otherwise be on their own.

While Metro Parks provides afterschool programs at 28 centers across the city, 16 of the 28 centers do not operate on Saturday, and three of the 16 centers that don't operate on Saturday also close at 6:30pm during the week. The other 25 centers are open from 8am- 8:30pm during the week. The three centers that close at 6:30pm during the week are the Parkwood, McFerrin, and Kirkpatrick centers which are located in high-risk areas in the city and arguably would benefit the city more by having the doors open for youth.

If community center hours were increased to operate on Saturday at the 16 neighborhood centers that are currently not open, it is estimated that they could serve approximately 3,900 more students per week. Increasing operating hours at the 16 neighborhood centers on Saturdays from 8am- 12 noon would be an estimated cost of an additional \$442,439 annually in operating funding, and to increase the hours on Saturday at the 16 centers from 8am -4pm would be an estimated increase in the operating budget of \$763,527. While there are challenges with the Metro budget at this time and the increase in Metro Parks' hours would add to the strain on the overall budget, we must consider if the benefits of investing in afterschool and summer programs outweighs the costs, and look at how we can prioritize and raise funding to ensure that all youth have access to experiences and settings that support their needs.

2. Improve transportation access for youth to afterschool and summer programs

In meeting with eight different organizations that offer and support afterschool programs in Nashville, the committee heard a common theme that transportation is a huge barrier to providing services to more youth. Transportation costs are a large part of afterschool program budgets. NAZA pays a total of \$275,000 annually for 14 buses (about \$20,000 per bus/28weeks) to transport students from school-based programs to their homes. The Boys & Girls Club's transportation costs are approximately \$152,000 per year to service 43 Metro Public schools. To address the need for improved access to transportation for youth to afterschool and summer programs, a safe and reliable transportation option could be the increase of Nashville, MTA- WeGo Public Transit services.

For the past five years, Nashville MTA - WeGo Public Transit ("WeGo") has partnered with Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) to provide at no cost to all high school students year-round public transit services across Davidson County. Under the StrIDe program, student ID cards double as a WeGo bus pass. The same program is available to middle school students attending MNPS schools who do not have MNPS-provided transportation services between home and school and whose parent or guardian has signed a waiver with their child's school granting their student permission to use the StrIDe program. The program is currently not available to charter middle school students; however, each charter middle school may contract directly with WeGo to pay for their students use of the bus system.

As a city-wide transit system, WeGo provides direct service (as well as close proximity) to many public buildings, services, and schools across approximately 35 local and express bus routes. As a publicly accessible fixed-route service however, WeGo does not operate similar to a school bus system (or is legally able to do so) wherein a bus would go directly between a school and an after-school program at a specific time (unless a public building or service is coincidentally located along a fixed

route line that the bus is traveling the duration of the service).

Like all public transit systems, WeGo transit services are reliant upon several funding sources to cover its operations with Metro Government being its number one funder. Coming off a round of more than \$8 million in service cuts due to three consecutive years of flat budget subsidies, additional operating and/or capital assistance would be needed to expand any program or services. Current fully-allocated bus operating rates are calculated at \$132 an hour, with labor being WeGo's greatest expense category.

In addition to overall improvement of service quality and reliability, these phased-in improvements would come at an estimated cost of an additional \$25 million annually in operating funding. Expansion of the StrIDe program with corresponding funding (currently budgeted by MNPS at \$750,000 annually) could include a broader portion of the youth population with the program including all middle school, charter, and homeschool students. This, however, would not fully address the issue of a clear door-to-door service from specific school to afterschool program locations.

In cases where existing bus routes serve a school or afterschool facility but there is not sufficient capacity on the existing buses for the demand, WeGo may be able to add additional buses to support the ridership demand (with appropriate funding). In cases where there is an afterschool or summer program in proximity to an existing bus route but lacking appropriate pedestrian infrastructure, WeGo may be able to make minor routing modifications in order to serve such a center, provided there is sufficient demand for such a deviation and the impact to other customers on board the bus would not be substantial.

WeGo has a solid, cooperative work history and relationship with the leadership at MNPS and is happy and willing to discuss further concepts under both their and our operating parameters to better serve the youth and families of our community. When considering establishment of new middle schools and afterschool / summer programs, priority should be given to those that are located on or in safe walking distance of existing bus routes in order to improve access while maximizing use of existing transit resources. More broadly, from both an operational and planning perspective and if funding were made available, prioritized investment in the expansion of our "frequent transit network routes" should be considered to provide what may provide the greatest positive impact on ridership.

Following is a list of MNPS Middle Schools served by WeGo bus service. Those highlighted in yellow have service that is either greater than a half-mile from a stop or offers no service at all. Please note that this list does not consider the availability and length of the sidewalks as a part of the school and route accessibility. With a list of current or potential afterschool sites, WeGo can map its current service in relation to specific site locations and include any additional accessibility conditions (i.e. sidewalks, etc.).

List of MNPS Middle Schools served by WeGo bus service. Those highlighted in yellow have service that is either greater than a half-mile from a stop or offers no service at all.

School Name	Route	Stop Location
Antioch Middle	73-Bell Road	Blue Hole Road & Bell Road
Apollo Middle	38-Antioch	Richards Road & Debra Drive
Bellevue Middle	5-West End/Bellevue 24-Bellevue	Baugh Road & Colice Jeanne Road Hwy 70 S & Colice Jeanne Road
Creswell Middle Prep School of the Arts	22-Bordeaux	Creswell Middle Prep School of the Arts
Croft Middle Design Center	52-Nolensville Pike	Nolensville Pike & Elysian Fields
Donelson Middle	6-Lebanon Pike	Lebanon Pike & Stewarts Ferry Pike
DuPont-Hadley Middle	No Service	No Service
DuPont-Tyler Middle	No Service	No Service
East Nashville Magnet	56-Gallatin Pike	Gallatin Pike & Five Points
Goodlettsville Middle	35-Rivergate	Long Hollow Pike & Northgate Drive
Gra-Mar Middle	43-Hickory Hills	Maplewood High School
Haynes Middle Health/ Medical Science Design Center	14-Whites Creek 41-Golden Valley	Bapt. World Center Drive & W Trinity Lane Trinity & Monticello
Head Middle Magnet	25-Midtown 50-Charlotte Pike	Jo Johnston & Dr. DB Todd Jr. Boulevard Charlotte Pike & 20th
HG Hill Middle	5-West End/Bellevue	Harding Road & Davidson Drive
Isaac Litton Middle	56-Gallatin Pike	Gallatin Pike & Broadmoor
Jere Baxter Middle	23-Dickerson Road	Dickerson Road & Hart Lane
John Early Museum Magnet	42-St. Cecilia/Cumberland	Cass Street & Dominican Drive
John F. Kennedy Middle	96-Nashville/Murfreesboro	Murfreesboro Pike & Hobson Pike
J.T. Moore Middle	17-12th Avenue South	Lipscomb University
Madison Middle	56-Gallatin Pike	Gallatin Pike & Old Hickory
Margaret Allen Middle	18-Airport	Elm Hill Pike & Spence Lane
McKissack Middle	19-Herman	Clifton Avenue & 39th
McMurray Middle	52-Nolensville Pike	Nolensville Pike & McMurray Road
Meigs Magnet	56-Gallatin Pike	Gallatin Pike & 6th
Rose Park Magnet Math and Science	8-8th Avenue South 25-Midtown	8th Avenue & Edgehill Avenue Edgehill Avenue & Hillside Avenue
Thurgood Marshall Middle	No Service	No Service
Two Rivers Middle	34-Opry Mills	McGavock Pike & Stones River
West End Middle	3-West End/White Bridge 5-West End/Bellevue	West End & Bowling
Oliver Wright Middle	52-Nolensville Pike	Nolensville Pike & McCall Street

3. Transition NAZA to a Metro Government Agency/Office/Commission of Afterschool and Summer Coordination to enable NAZA to scale up its funding and support services to all afterschool and summer programs in Nashville

Often access to high-quality out-of-school time enriching opportunities is dependent on parents' financial standing. For low-income families, the opportunities for experiences that promote positive development and continued learning for their children are limited. NAZA seeks to narrow this opportunity gap by increasing our community's investment in middle school youth and their access to educational, cultural and social learning experiences.

Annually, NAZA invests \$3 million in youth-serving organizations so that afterschool and summer programs can be offered at no cost to middle school youth and their families. Contracts are awarded to youth-serving organizations on a competitive basis. This funding is made possible largely through sustainable allocations from Metro Government of Nashville and Davidson County as well as national and local grants. In addition, through a partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), NAZA-funded partners access programs space, meals and snacks, transportation, and student data to inform programming. NAZA empowers youth through innovative learning approaches that help inspire their interest, engagement, and motivation to learn. Youth in NAZA-funded programs also access library resources including books and digital resources through Limitless Libraries, teen mentors through T.O.T.A.L., and a makerspace through StudioNPL.

The Afterschool Special Committee's recommendation to transition NAZA from a Library sub-division to a Metro Government Agency/Office/Commission of Afterschool and Summer Coordination, will allow for increased funding and fundraising opportunities, as well as expanded data-sharing services for all out-of-school time programs for youth under NAZA-MNPS data-sharing agreement. In addition, the move will open the door for large-scale expansion of existing programs through capacity-building and evaluation services, and provide a hub for increased public awareness about the availability of after school and summer programs throughout the city.

Currently, NAZA receives \$3.1 million from the Government annually as part of Nashville Public Library Budget. Out of that, \$280k is allocated to OASIS Center for College Connections and Mayor's Youth Council programs. Another \$120K is allocated to Opportunity NOW for summer experience learning support for 14-16-year-olds. The rest of 2.7 million is allocated to cover afterschool programming for 1,120 slots, afterschool buses and expenses of a team of 8 who support all system level functions (operations, contracts, data and evaluation, capacity building, coaching and support, communication and events, grants and new initiatives). One more team member is funded through a State grant to Metro (projects manager-temporary). Of the \$2.7 million, \$2.4 million is contracted to the YMCA, including \$157,000 is paid to YMCA as a 7% indirect cost as they hire six NAZA team members as well as manage sub-contracts. This amount does not include travel and supply budget for NAZA team members as they are classified under direct cost. This happens because NAZA/Library are unable to hire staff directly and manage sub-contracts directly because of complicated Purchasing Office procedures.

If NAZA did not have to rely on YMCA or other community agency to act as an implementing partner and was able to hire team directly and sub-contract with afterschool providers directly, it would save at least \$157,000 that would cover its own operational costs and any difference between Metro benefits

and what the YMCA currently pays. **With that said, NAZA could operate at the existing funding level with the same number of team members for at least another fiscal year even if it hired all team members as Government employees.**

In order to fully control the budget and staff performance as well as expand easily when either public and/or private funds are available, NAZA will need a status that will allow the system to operate independently, employ staff directly and hold them accountable to the same performance standards; and be able to sub-contract with community partners directly and have them adhere to Metro funding rules and regulations. Any solution for NAZA must avoid assuming Metro Purchasing office as an option for community sub-contracts because of the complexity of procedures and length of completion of sub-contracts. To operate NAZA with efficiency and increased accountability, a simpler and more direct solicitation of afterschool services provided by community agencies should be considered.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Metro Council Afterschool Special Committee has been charged with assessing current afterschool programs in Nashville and making recommendations to address barriers that Nashville's afterschool programs have to serving more youth. Through our analysis of national studies and research, we learned that when evaluating out-of-school time opportunities there is a vital need to include summer programs in the assessment. Afterschool service providers are often the ones to provide summer programs as well, and these summer programs have major community impacts on the educational and social development of youth.

After considerable evaluation of the common barriers impacting the accessibility of the afterschool and summer programs that we assessed and discussion about research on the effectiveness of afterschool and summer programs overall, we recommend that increasing operating hours at all community centers during the week and on Saturdays; improving transportation access for youth to afterschool and summer programs; and transitioning NAZA to a Metro Government Agency/Office/Commission of Afterschool and Summer Coordination will help address the need for improving availability and access to afterschool and summer programs for Nashville youth. Additionally, we feel that the children and youth who otherwise would not have an opportunity to participate in afterschool and summer programs will reap a host of positive benefits in a number of interrelated outcome areas including academic, social/emotional, prevention, and health and wellness.

Furthermore, the hours after school, between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., offer opportunities for juvenile crime, sexual activity, and other risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, and studies have shown that participation in afterschool programs have a positive impact on juvenile crime and help reduce pregnancies, teen sex, and boys' marijuana use (Goldschmidt, Huang, & Chinen, 2007; Philliber, Kaye, & Herrling, 2001; Philliber, Kaye, Herrling, & West, 2002). While increasing availability and access to afterschool and summer programs for youth in Nashville may not totally solve the socioeconomic issues that our city faces, and parent involvement should be a factor in juvenile corrective behaviors, we believe that our recommendations will help support Metro Government's efforts to improve quality of life and equity in educational and developmental experiences for our youth.