



One Public Square, Suite  
204 Nashville, Tennessee  
37201

January 31, 2020

VICE MAYOR SHULMAN'S  
Special Committee on  
School Supplies &  
Textbooks

The Honorable Jim Shulman  
Vice Mayor of Nashville and Davidson County  
1 Public Square, Suite 204  
Nashville, TN 37201

Dear Vice-Mayor Shulman,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Special Committee on School Supplies & Textbooks. Our final report is attached.

This report outlines current policies and practices related to MNPS school supplies acquisition and textbook purchases. It also includes our recommendations that the MNPS Board adopts, as well as other recommendations for the Mayor's Office, the Metro Council, and the PENCIL non-profit with the mission to serve MNPS teachers.

We hope this report provides clarity to about current policies and practices and that it lays a solid foundation for ensuring our students have the resources they need moving forward.

It has been an honor to do this important work.

Respectfully,  
The Vice-Mayor's Special Committee of School Supplies & Textbooks

Tonya Hancock  
Metro Councilor, District 9 (chair)

Cathy Jobe, Citizen District 1  
Citizen District 1

Zulfat Suara  
Metro Council At Large

Jessa Tremblay  
Citizen District 13

Brett Withers  
Metro Council District 6

Jena Armistead  
Citizen District 23

Zach Young  
Metro Council District 1

Amani Samuel, Cane Ridge HS  
Mayor's Youth Council

Dave Rosenberg  
Metro Council District 35

Elizabeth "Bibi" Hines  
Citizen District 26



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Textbooks

**FINAL REPORT**

On October 25, 2019, Vice Mayor Shulman announced the members of his Special Committee on School Supplies and Textbooks. Comprised of leaders from the community, the schools, and Metro Government, the Committee was directed to submit its final report to the Vice Mayor by January 31, 2020.

**The Special Committee on School Supplies and Textbooks key findings:**

- School Supplies is a large and broad category; as such, teachers have an inadequate reimbursement amount/procedure.
- Textbooks, also referred to as Instructional Materials, are a large but necessary piece of the school budget and must be supplied to all students across the district.
- There can be more equity across the district by encouraging non-profit organizations such as PENCIL to focus on the schools that do not have a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)/Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other ability to fund and supplement the school.

**Vice Mayor Shulman appointed the following individuals to serve on the Special Committee on School Supplies and Textbooks:**

- Tonya Hancock: Metro Council District 9 (chair)
- Zulfat Suara: Metro Council At Large
- Brett Withers: Metro Council, District 6
- Zach Young: Metro Council District 10
- Dave Rosenberg: Metro Council District 35
- Cathy Jobe, Citizen District 1
- Pastor Shane England, Citizen District 8
- Jessa Tremblay, Citizen District 13
- Jena Armistead, Citizen District 23
- Nawzad Hawrami, Citizen District 30
- Amani Samuel, Mayor's Youth Council, Cane Ridge High School Student

**Several additional community members attended and contributed:**

- Melissa Brooks, Assistant Principal, Madison Middle
- Elizabeth “Bibi” Hines, MNPS Parent and Substitute
- Jim Shulman, Vice Mayor
- Christiane Buggs, MNPS School Board District 5
- David Williams, MNPS Interim Chief Academic Officer
- Jill Speering, MNPS School Board District 3
- Angie Adams, PENCIL President & CEO
- Joel Wright, PENCIL Box Manager
- Bryan Zuralic, Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH)
- Byron Harvey, NOAH
- Doug Lucas, NOAH
- Jessica Bliss, The Tennessean
- Kyontzé Toombs, Metro Council District 2
- Jill Petty, MNPS Asst Chief Academic Officer

**The Special Committee Held Eight Publicly Noticed Meetings:**

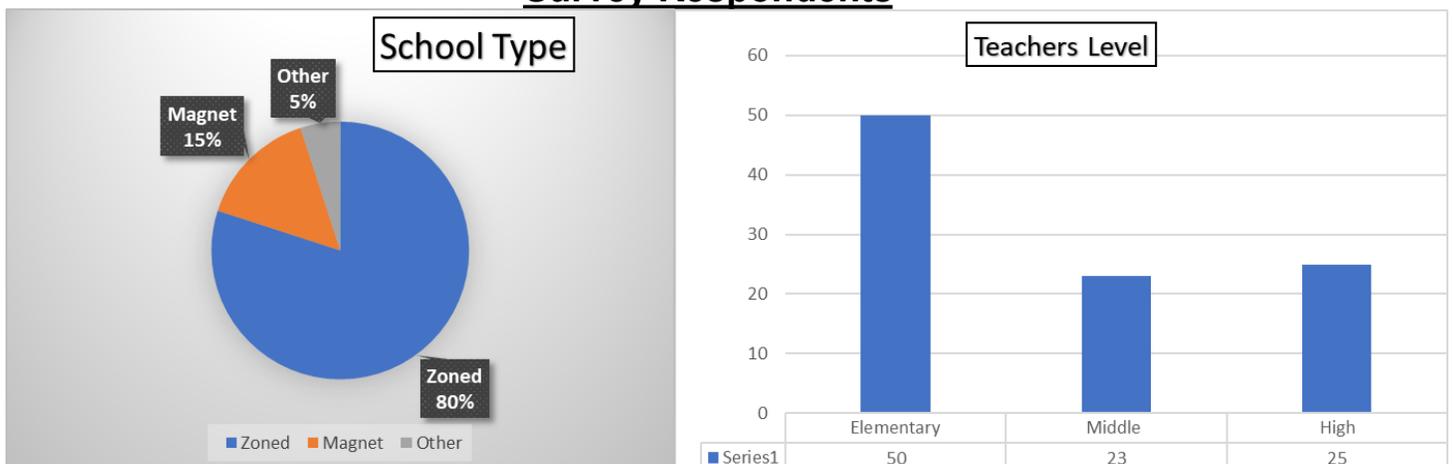
- Thursday, November 7 - Metro Council Offices
- Friday, November 15 - Tin Cup Coffee, Madison
- Saturday, November 23 - Richland Park Branch Library
- Friday, December 6 - Casa Azafrán, 2195 Nolensville Pike
- Thursday, December 12 - PENCIL, 7199 Cockrill Bend Blvd
- Monday, December 16 - Cane Ridge High School, Antioch
- Thursday, January 9 - Amqui Elementary School
- Wednesday, January 15 - John Early Museum Magnet Middle School

**Scope of Work:**

Task Force members agreed on the following scope of work:

- (1) Conduct a survey of the ~5,000 teachers serving 168 schools across MNPS.
- (2) Analyze how much school supply funding is needed per teacher.
- (3) Analyze the overall textbook situation, how to address inequities, and how to make a long term plan moving forward.

**Survey Respondents**



## **Landscape analysis of MNPS School Supplies/Materials Purchases:**

### **School Supplies**

School supplies vary by grade level and by teacher. Some ask for the basics (pencils, pens, paper, folders, notebooks, markers, etc.). Others have specific needs (topic specific books, technology, manipulatives, decor, furniture, rewards, first-aid supplies, etc.). If these are not approved by BEP or provided by PTA, PTO, PENCIL, or other financial assistance, teachers often spend out of pocket.

### **Basic Education Program (BEP)**

Teachers receive \$200 of BEP funding that is regulated by the state guidelines, although oftentimes implementation will vary from school to school. All teachers spend their entire allotment; however many experience challenges along the way as they ask for reimbursement.

### **PENCIL**

PENCIL is a non-profit created 37 years ago exclusively for MNPS schools. Sponsored by LP, Ingram, HCA, and other businesses, teachers have the option to shop at PENCIL up to four times per year and receive a \$1000 allotment per year. Supply is dependent on donations but has much of the basics needed. In the 2019-2020 school year, ~\$1.5M of supplies will be distributed to about 1,500 teachers. Interim Superintendent Dr. Adrian Battle would like every teacher to get something from PENCIL next school year. PENCIL has Ambassadors in about one-third of the schools who encourage use of the program.

### **Equity in Disbursement**

Not all students come to school with the items they need. Schools in more developed socio economic areas can often find money for extra supplies from PTOs or parents; it seems the schools without access to donated funds could reap a higher benefit from the non-profit PENCIL.

### **Survey Results**

The survey had a 19% response rate, with a statistically significant sample from each cluster across Nashville, and 58% of respondents made specific informative comments. Respondents were 80% from Zoned schools 80%, 15% from magnet schools, and 5% from other schools. Teachers were 50% Elementary, 23% Middle, 25% High School, and 2% Other. All clusters were represented with the highest rate from Antioch, McGavock, and Overton. Teacher responses indicate they use their entire \$200 BEP allotment. Out of pocket spending averages \$410 per teacher, with a \$0-\$2500 range. PENCIL usage is Regularly 44%, Occasionally 28%, Once 11%, and Never 16%. The recommendation is \$460 of funding per teacher, with a \$0-\$5000 range.

## **Landscape analysis of MNPS Textbook (Instructional Materials) Purchases:**

### **Tennessee Statutes**

Tennessee statute (TCA 49-6-2207,2010) establishes that local school boards are authorized and required to adopt textbooks and instructional materials to be used in their schools. Further, Tennessee statute (TCA 49-6-2206,2010) requires teachers to use textbooks and instructional materials adopted by the local school board from the list of state-approved textbooks and instructional materials. The state textbook commission establishes the adoption cycle for the various subject areas, roughly six years for each subject. If a particular course or grade level misses an adoption, it will be several years before it cycles around again.

### **Number of Textbooks**

During the last two adoption years, the district elected to purchase classroom sets (one set per teacher) rather than the standard (one textbook per student). This resulted in a reduced average cost of \$40 per student rather than the typical \$120, but students no longer have their own textbooks assigned to them. It was agreed by this committee that each student needs their own text for studying and homework. Though the movement of our culture is away from textbooks, that is not conducive to self-study when the student is not equipped with technology and reliable access to the internet. Teachers do have the opportunity to weigh in on which textbooks and/or instructional materials will be selected for the district.

### **Cost of Textbooks**

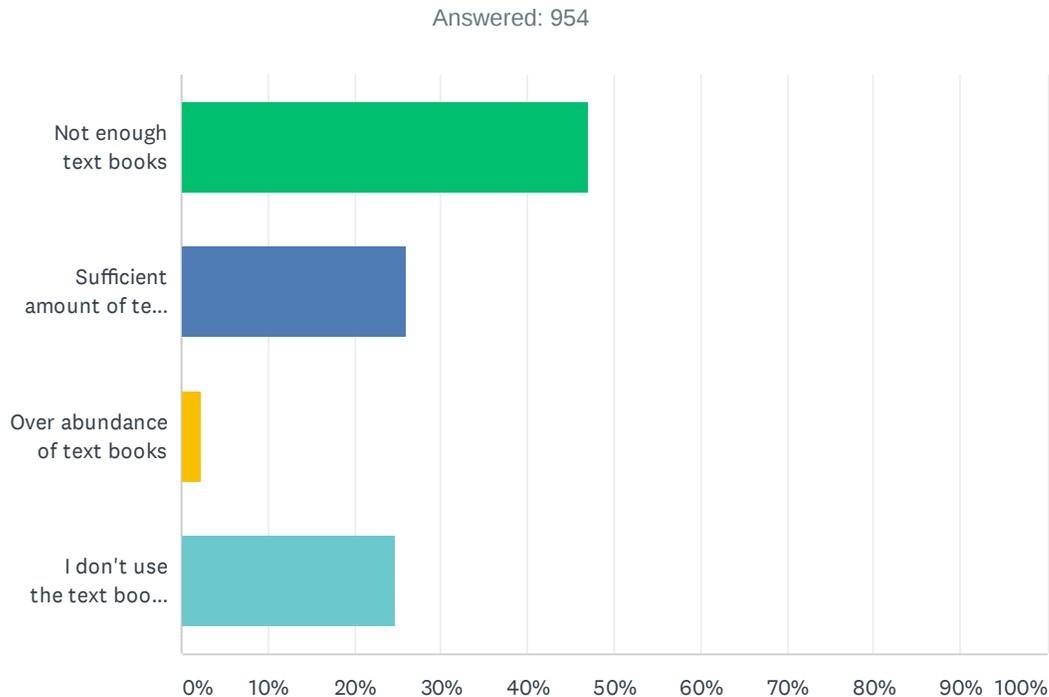
The average cost of textbooks each year is \$6.5 million. The estimated cost of English Language Arts textbooks for the 2020-2021 school year is \$12-14 million (ELA adoption year is the most expensive year of the cycle). The estimated cost of purchasing “catch-up” textbooks from the last two years is \$2.5 million. Due to various classroom management strategies, like book distribution and collection, the end result varies by school. Likewise, when funding was cut across the board for the book-buying season, some schools went without whereas others asked for donations or did fundraisers to obtain the necessary textbooks.

### **Survey Results**

According to the teacher survey, the condition of textbooks varies, with 26% stating less than favorable, 49% as favorable, and 25% in between. Forty-seven percent of respondents do not have enough textbooks, 26% have a sufficient number, 2% an overabundance, and 25% do not use the textbooks provided. Teachers would like to move to digital curriculum, but technology investment required to deliver digital content to every student is not available in MNPS schools today, and educators attest that the physical/tactile experience enhances learning for all. Ultimately, the technology department needs to plan to include more and better technology (computers and wifi) in schools. However, digital curriculum is not a cost savings from the publisher, as the price is for the content and number of users.

## School Supplies Policy Recommendations to MNPS:

- Budget an additional \$500 per teacher, in addition to the \$200 provided from the state in the form of BEP, for teachers to spend for the good of the students.
- Request that teachers use BEP funds for standard school supplies before accessing additional funds provided by MNPS, PTA, PTO, etc.
- Provide classrooms with janitorial products necessary for keeping kids healthy and classrooms clean (e.g. wipes, tissue, hand sanitizer, first aid kits)



## Textbook Policy Recommendations to MNPS

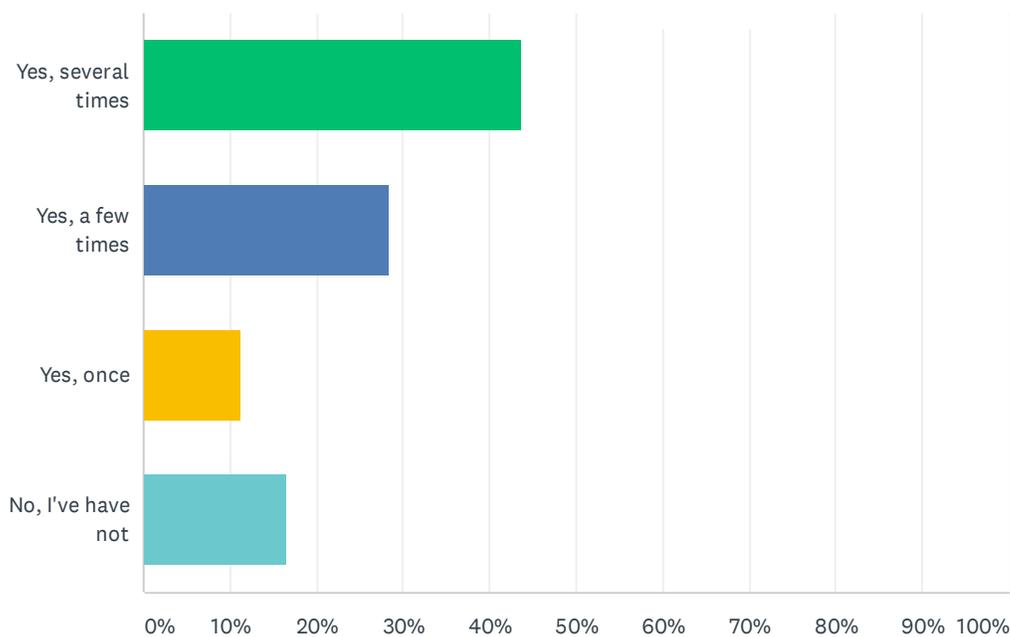
- Textbooks should be listed on the budget as non-negotiable. Purchasing a classroom set is not serving the needs of the entire student population, and is causing a backslide in education. Purchasing enough for every student is our expectation, and is non-negotiable moving forward, including 2020-2021.
- Prior to the 2020-2021 school year, purchase textbooks that were not purchased in the last two budget cycles.
- Syllabus standards should include a statement listing the assigned textbook.
- Develop a comprehensive plan to modernize instructional technology for the entire district by 2021-2022 school year. Execute the plan by 2023-2024.

## Recommendations to PENCIL:

- First, prioritize the high priority schools and work with Principals and Assistant Principals to recruit an ambassador at every high priority school in MNPS. Work to expand distribution to teachers at those schools first. Let high priority teachers have early access to the appointment calendar.
- Work with Principals to recruit ambassadors at schools with low participation.
- Continue to take input from teachers on needs and inform suppliers of needs.

### Q4 Have you ever utilized PENCIL for school supplies?

Answered: 954



## Recommendations to Metro Council:

- Adopt a budget that fully funds the schools.
- Pass a resolution to request the State revise BEP Guidelines as long as expenditures contribute to the education and growth of the students.

## Recommendations to Mayor Cooper:

- Submit a budget that fully funds the schools, with these details:
  - \$2.5 million - School Supplies for teachers (\$500 per teacher)
  - \$13 million - English Language Arts textbook adoption, 2020-2021
  - \$1.4 million - Science Textbooks not purchased, 2018-2019
  - \$1.1 million - Social Studies Textbooks not purchased, 2019-2020
  - \$18 million - Total non-negotiable expenses