



Explore! Community School

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Nashville, TN
37206

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Introduction to the School

Name of school: Explore! Community School

Type of charter: K-8

Year school opened: 2015

Age of school: 2 years

School hours: 8:00 – 3:45 Monday-Thursday, 8:00 – 1:30 Friday

Grade level(s) served: K-2

Current enrollment: 229

Maximum enrollment: 234

Number of instructional days per school year: 180

Name of Board President: Brock Kidd

Board President email address: brock.kidd@pnfp.org

Board President phone number: (615) 406-4776

Name of School Leader: Jon Driskell

School Leader email address: jdriskell@explore.school

School Leader phone number: (615) 784-8222

Mission Statement: The mission of Explore! Community School is to foster the independence, critical thinking, and creativity of a diverse community of learners so they are fully prepared to become confident, responsible, and successful leaders.



Section I – Progress Toward Goals

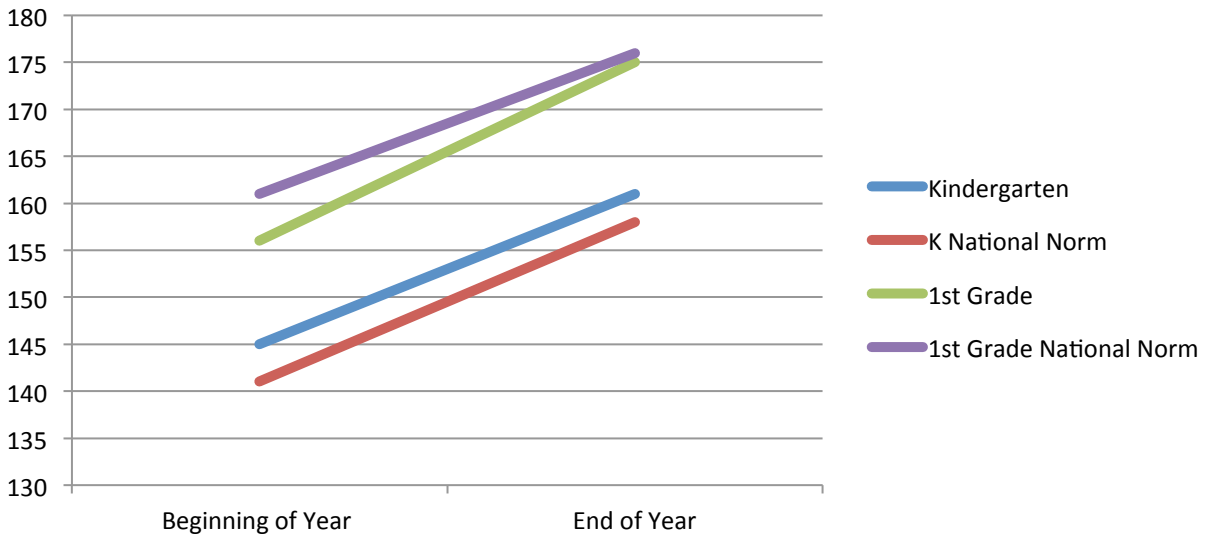
In our charter application approved by the Metro Nashville Board of Education, we identify ambitious goals to outperform peer schools and ensure our students are truly prepared to fulfill our mission. In the 2016-2017 school year, Explore students achieved the following results:

- 69% of Explore students met or exceeded the end-of-year reading benchmark as measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Benchmark Assessment
- 55% of Explore students read at least one level above the end-of-year reading benchmark as measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Benchmark Assessment.
- On average, Explore students matched the national performance on the NWEA-MAP assessment in reading and math.
- 100% of Explore students publicly exhibited the projects completed over the course of our three rigorous project-based learning units.

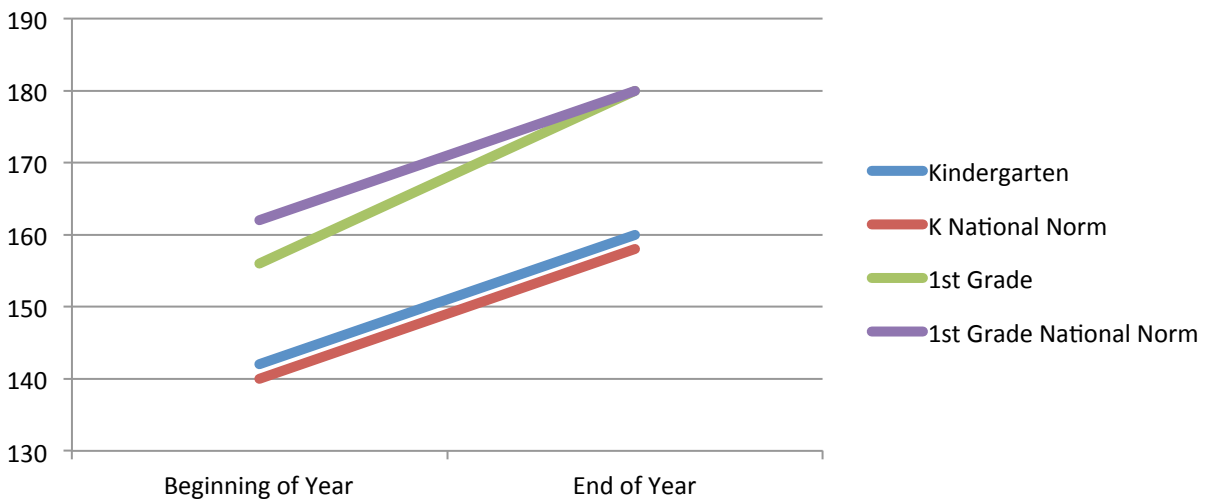
Each year, we assess our program and adjust in order to ensure all of our students perform at the highest level. Explore's curriculum and instructional approach are grounded in the latest research and best practices along with a holistic approach that fosters whole-child development. Moving into year three, we have increased our focus on consistent student attendance, increased family engagement, improved implementation of trauma-informed care to support students impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), and staff retention to ensure we continuously improve the education provided for our students.

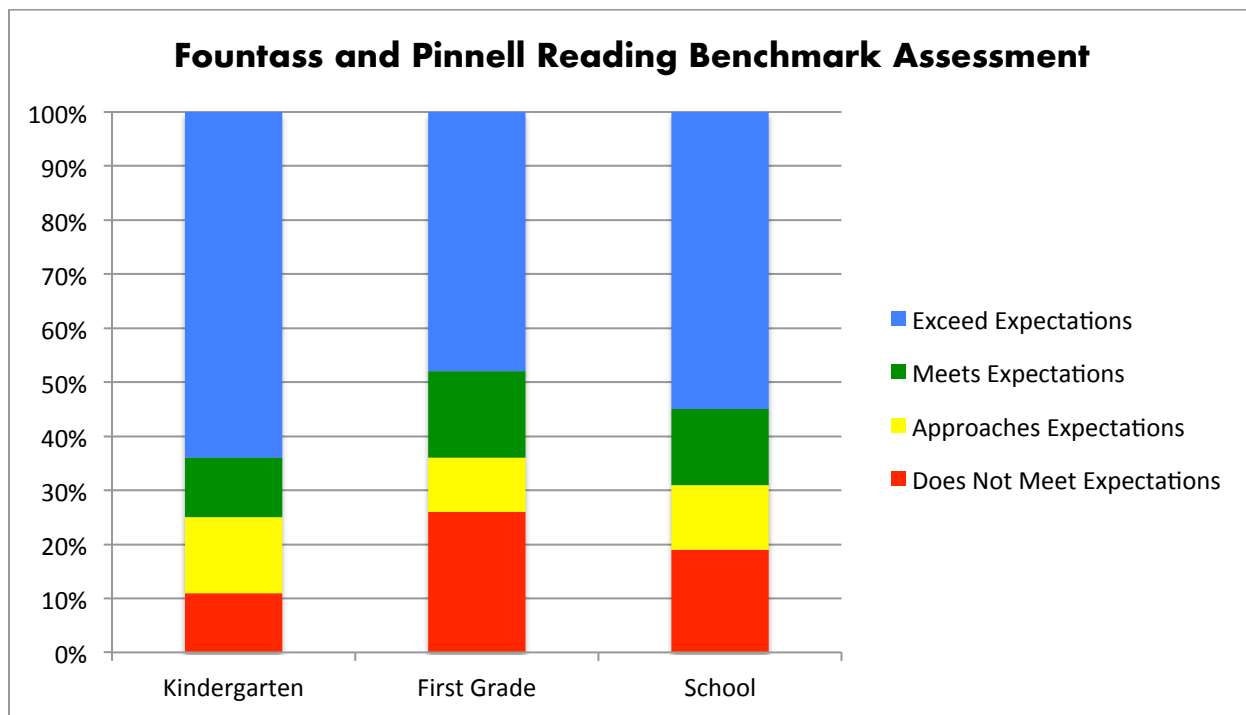


2016-2017 NWEA-MAP Reading Median RIT



2016-2017 NWEA-MAP Math Median RIT





Section II – Student Mobility

During the 2016-2017 school year, 15 students left Explore (14% mobility). Of those 15, 1 family chose to enroll in a private school, 3 chose to home school, 5 enrolled in another MNPS school, and 11 moved out of the district. Zero students were expelled from the school.

Section III – Operations and Finance

With the support and expertise of our parent organization, the Martha O’Bryan Center, our operations and finance have been solid and healthy throughout our first year. We implement sound planning processes, and procedures and monitor our expenses, revenue, and cash flow daily to ensure Explore is financially stable. Through constant communication with the district regarding benefits and retirement, per pupil allotments, Title 1 revenue, and IDEA funding, we maintain real-time information that is utilized to adjust and confirm our projections. This stability and viability is evident in our financial statements.

Just as we are detail-oriented in our teaching and learning, we similarly focus on general operations to operate with a high standard of excellence. We always look



for opportunities to operate more efficiently and keep our teachers 100% focused on their students and classrooms. to ensure we are systematizing in order to ensure sustainability in the long run.

Our 2016-2017 audit had zero findings.

Section IV – Leadership Changes

Over the 2016-2017 school year, we added two board members in order to focus on priority areas for the leadership of our school in the future. Our board members are listed below with new members in italics. There have been no changes in school leadership at the school level in our first year.

Brock Kidd – Chair

Tony Hughes – Treasurer

Marsha Edwards – Governance and Development

Ben Cundiff – Governance

Amy Liz Riddick – Public Relations and Development

Daryl Floyd – Parent Representative

Amy Richards – Development

Patrick Holcombe – Facilities and Technology

Charles Webb - Development

Section V – Parent and Community Involvement

Authentic family engagement and community involvement is a hallmark of Explore’s approach and integral to our everyday operations. Therefore, we do not require any superficial tasks or obligations at Explore, preferring to design events and opportunities that families and community members will find compelling in which to participate. Foremost amongst these are our Exhibitions of Learning in which students present their projects to an authentic audience of school stakeholders and community leaders. We hold three of these Exhibitions each year as the culmination of each project-based learning unit. Each Exhibitions last year had over 100 participants. They included the following:

- **Our World, Our Backyard:** As the culmination of the unit in which students strived to answer the question, “How can I ensure access and opportunity for all in my community and world?”, Explore students wrote a play detailing their



understanding of the immigrant experience in Nashville which they staged and performed at the main branch of the Nashville Public Library.

- **Inventors and Entrepreneurs:** Following months of learning about the innovation process and local and historical inventors and entrepreneurs, students identified a problem from their life build a model of their invention to solve that problem, and developed a marketing plan for their invention. They then pitched their inventions to local entrepreneurs in a manner inspired by the popular *Shark Tank* television show.
- **What is Beauty?:** Over the course of this unit, Explorers grappled with the definition of beauty by examining historical perspectives, stereotypes, and media portrayals. Students then learned alongside artists about different genres of art and created pieces that represented their definitions of beauty.

In addition to these events and community partners, Explore partnered with the following community organizations during the 2016-2017 school year:

- iJam
- Plant the Seed
- Nashville Chess Center
- Nashville Children's Theatre
- Nashville Puppet Truck
- Nashville Opera
- Bridges
- Y-Cap
- Fifty-Forward

We believe that learning should not be bound within the walls of the classroom and strive everyday to provide meaningful, authentic learning for our students. Working closely with these partners enabled Explore to take our students to meaningful learning opportunities outside the classroom and bring experts in various fields to our students.

We also believe that parents are children's first teachers and the experts on their children. Therefore, we maintain open doors to our families and provide several opportunities for their engagement in the school. In order to show our welcome to families, we even maintain a "Family Room" within the schools in which families may gather, collaborate, and connect with one another to support our students. We also have an active Family Advisory Council that works relentlessly to support our school



and community. This Council met nearly every month last year with average attendance that represented over 30 of our families. The Council organized such events as:

- Earth Day Cleanup with other local MNPS schools
- Teacher Appreciation Lunches
- Monthly Community Coffees
- A ride-share to increase participation in school events
- A community support fund for families in need

In addition to these events, the school organized events for families that included Family Literacy Night, Family Math Night, Fall Festival, Open House, Field Day, and Talent Show. By creating these authentic opportunities for families to participate, they were able to meaningfully support student learning at Explore and were integral to our success last year.

Section VI – Promising Practices

- **Explorations:** Authentic and meaningful project-based learning is a hallmark of our approach at Explore. Each year, students complete three rigorous project-based learning units that seamlessly integrate core content, community engagement, service learning, and the arts as students deepen their understanding of academic skills and concepts through authentic application. The curriculum developed by Jessica Talbot, our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, led students to grapple with real-life problems and opportunities in their community while inspiring student ownership of learning and fostering a life-long lover for learning.
- **Lead/Associate Teacher Structure:** Every classroom at Explore is staffed by two teachers (along with a class Granny!). This structure enables differentiation of instruction that ensures every student receives lessons tailored for their needs and current abilities and is a great benefit for classroom management and maintaining a positive class culture. In addition, Associate Teachers have the opportunity to learn from experienced Lead Teachers as they participate in our professional development and culture with the hope that they develop into Lead Teachers in the future. Doing so helps serve as an in-house incubator of talent in order to ensure a steady pipeline of highly qualified teachers.



- **Enrichment Fridays:** Like most other charter schools, we release students early one day per week in order to provide professional development and work time for our teachers and staff. However, we recognize the hardship this places on families who must arrange transportation and childcare on that day. We turned this challenge to an opportunity by partnering with community organizations to provide enrichment programming on our early release day. Last year, we worked with the multiple partners to provide valuable enrichment opportunities for students. Our buses ran at the regular dismissal time in order to allow as many students as possible to participate. Although this arrangement presented some scheduling and logistical challenges, it also minimized the impact on families while providing valuable learning opportunities in a variety of fields for our students.

Section VII – Action Steps

- Secure permanent facility to house our K-8 student population
- Increase effectiveness of Title I Leadership Team to collaboratively address school improvement opportunities
- Improve outreach to targeted communities in order to increase diversity of student population and family engagement
- Improve quarterly data and RTI meetings to ensure Explore is utilizing our data effectively to drive continuous improvement
- Increase teacher planning time during the school day to improve staff culture and work-life balance
- Better tell the story of Explore’s successes through effective use of social media in order to increase engagement of families and stakeholders
- Improve daily average attendance to 90% or better to ensure students benefit from the entirety of our learning opportunities.
- Better implement Culturally Responsive Teaching to provide inclusive and meaningful learning experiences for all students, families, and staff.