



THE DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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Destination 2025: Strategic Plan Annual Report

January 2025

Executive Summary

Destination 2025 was Memphis-Shelby County Schools' (MSCS) strategic plan adopted in 2018. The plan focused on ensuring all students achieved academic and emotional success. Built on five enduring priorities, the plan reflected the District's commitment to equity and excellence, guiding strategies and tactics across all MSCS teams. These priorities, derived from years of program analysis, focused on addressing systemic challenges while celebrating and scaling the District's successes. The plan emphasized equitable access to high-quality instruction based on Tennessee State Standards, coupled with tiered interventions that met students where they were and propelled them forward. Beyond academics, Destination 2025 fostered a culture of compassion, cultural competence, and holistic student development, aimed at reducing disparities in discipline and absenteeism while nurturing a supportive learning environment for every child.

Destination 2025 was a forward-looking strategy that built on proven successes, emphasizing momentum through effective practices like sustained improvements in Literacy and Science via strong teacher development. By addressing the needs of both struggling students and high achievers, the plan aimed to ensure progress for all. It also called on the community to partner with the District in making equitable education a shared responsibility. Destination 2025 was phased out beginning in 2021 with the implementation of the Reimagine 901 campaign and Academic Framework although they were never officially adopted by the Board of Education as a strategic plan. This report serves as the final annual report under the Destination 2025 strategic plan as a result of the adoption of a new strategic plan in 2025.

Key Findings

- MSCS did not achieve the goal that 90% of 3rd graders would be reading on grade level, ending at 27.5% in 2024.
- While the District achieved its highest on time graduation rate in recent years in 2024, reaching 83.4%, MSCS was 6.6 percentage points below the target (90%).
- MSCS fell 38.8 percentage points short of the target of 100% of post-secondary enrollment for college-and-career ready graduates, following the national trend of a decline in college enrollment.

- 22.8% of grades 3–12 students demonstrated proficiency on the TNReady assessments taken in 2023–24, 37.2 percentage points below the target.
- 59.9% of school-aged children in Shelby County were enrolled in MSCS in fall of 2023 falling short of the goal by 9.1 percentage points.
- In 2021, the last year of available data, 87% of surveyed staff and community stakeholders agreed that the then Superintendent and the central office were on track to improve student achievement.

Progress To Date

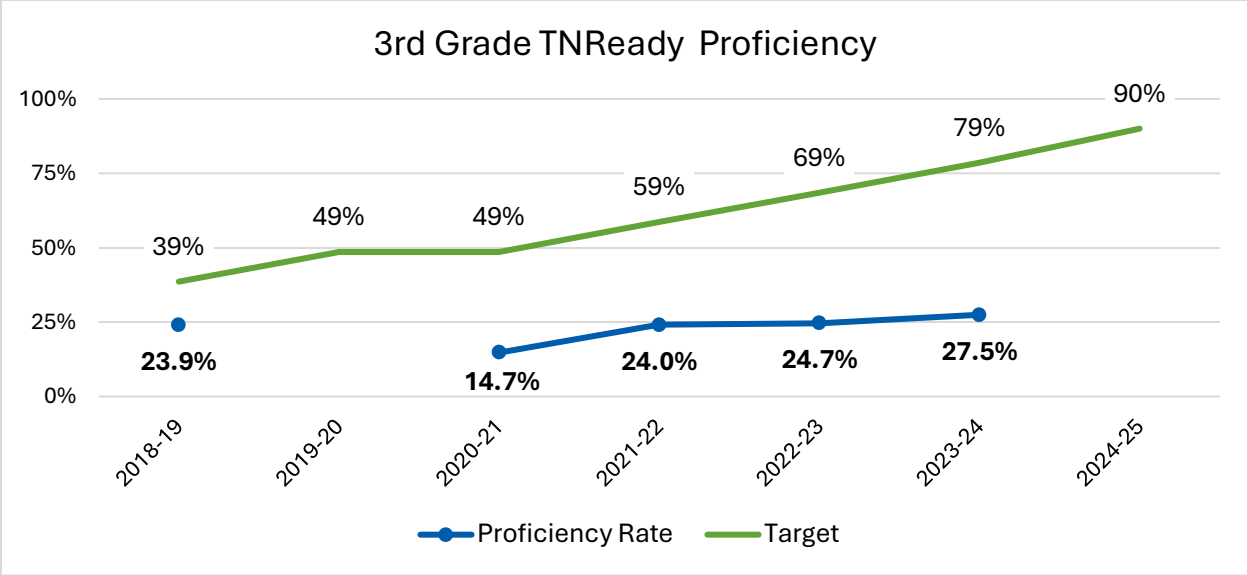
Priority	Metric	Status	2019	Current Data	Target	Difference	Most Recent Year
1	3rd Grade Reading Proficiency	Not Achieved	23.9%	27.5%	90%	-62.5%	2024
2	On Time Graduation	Not Achieved	79.3%	83.4%	90%	-6.6%	2024
	Post-Secondary Enrollment	Not Achieved	86.2%	61.2%	100%	-38.8	2023
3	TNReady Proficiency	Not Achieved	22.7%	22.8%	60%	-37.2%	2024
4	High Quality School Expansion	Not Achieved	63.6%	59.5%	69%	-9.1%	2024
5	Family & Community Partners	Not Achieved	82.0%	87.0%	90%	-3.0%	2021

Priority 1: Strengthen Early Literacy

2025 Goal: 90 percent of MSCS third graders are reading on grade level.

2025 Progress: MSCS did not achieve the goal that 90 percent of 3rd graders would be reading on grade level. While consistent progress was made post-pandemic, the District ended 62.5 percentage points below target.

Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS) set ambitious goals in the Destination 2025 strategic plan to ensure 3rd graders read on grade level, leading efforts in Tennessee even before the state implemented the third-grade promotion and retention law. Though MSCS recognized the need for a laser focus on literacy for our youngest students, the District faced significant setbacks after launching the plan. School closures and the shift to virtual learning during the global pandemic caused an almost 10 percentage point drop in 3rd grade reading proficiency following the March 2020 closures.



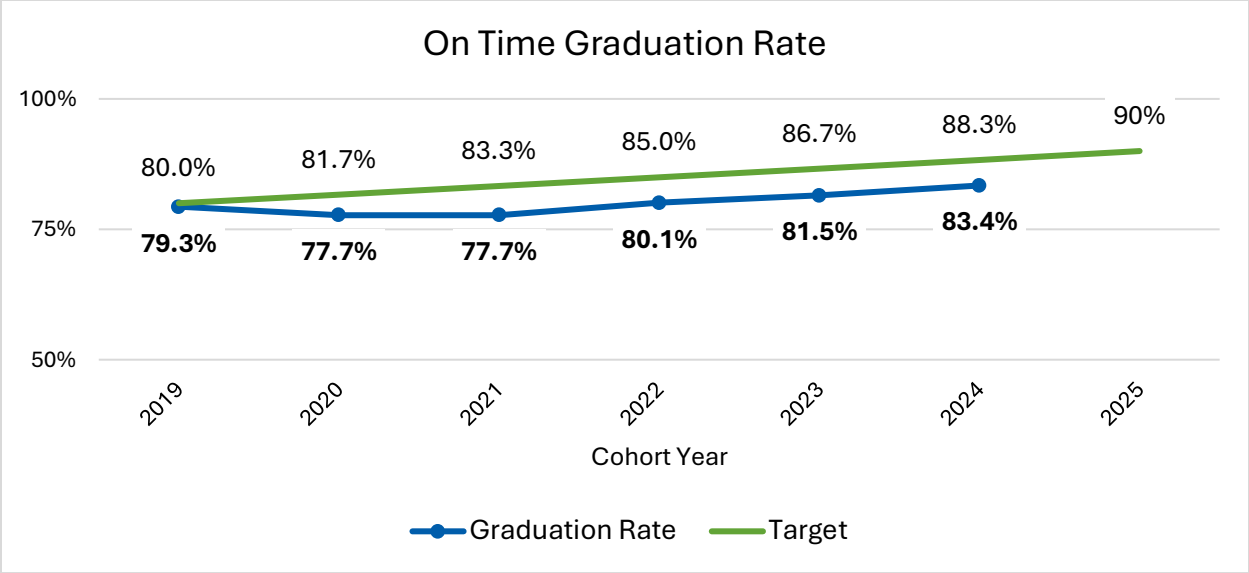
Since that initial decline, MSCS has made progress, gaining 12.8 percentage points in 3rd grade reading proficiency, as measured by the TNReady ELA exam. The 2023–24 school year marks the highest performance at 27.5% proficiency. However, these gains remain far below the strategic plan’s 90 percent target, leaving 3rd graders 62.5 percentage points short of the goal with only testing cycle remaining in the plan.

Priority 2: Improve Post-Secondary Readiness

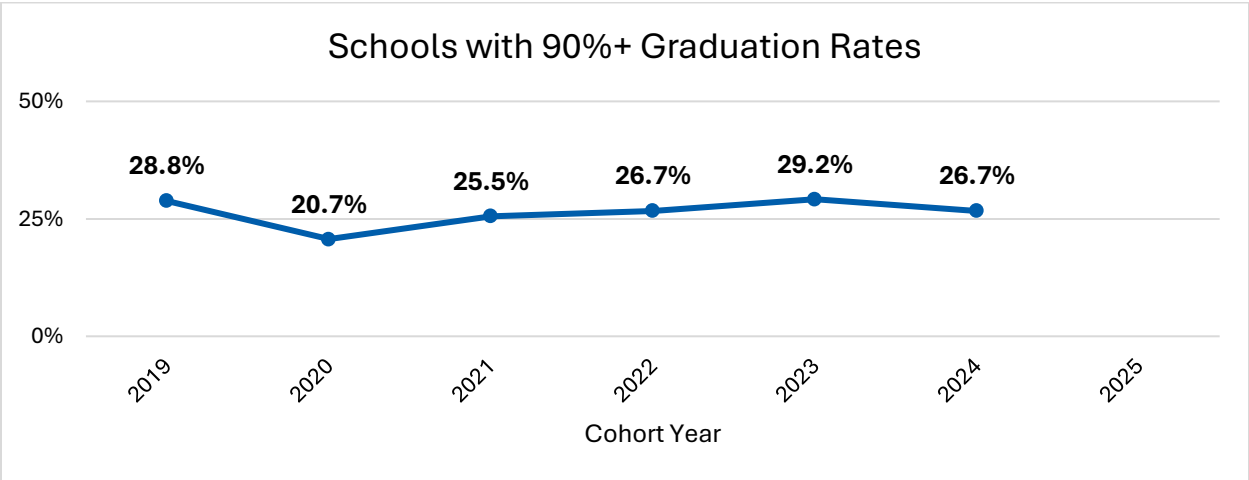
2025 Goal: 90 percent of MSCS students graduate on time, and 100 percent of college- or career-ready graduates enroll in a post-secondary opportunity.

2025 Progress: Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS) achieved its highest on time graduation rate in 2024, reaching 83.4%. While this remains 6.6 percentage points below the target, it marks an improvement of 4.1 percentage points from the initial benchmark. Additionally, MSCS fell 38.8 percentage points short of the target of 100 percent post-secondary enrollment for college-and-career ready graduates. Although enrollment rates decreased, the count of students enrolling in higher education rose along with the percent of the graduating cohort considered college-and-career ready.

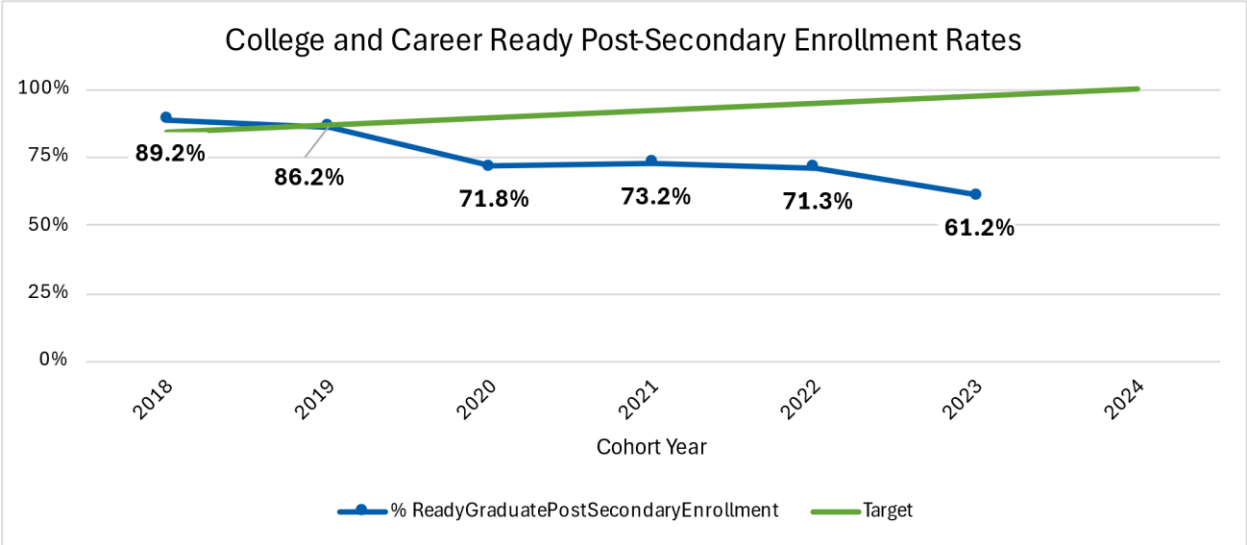
MSCS made steady progress toward its on time graduation rate target in 2024, reaching its highest rate in recent years at 83.4%. This achievement was likely impacted by the addition of graduation coaches, targeted focus on credit recovery, and additional high school-level interventions offered prior to and scaled up with ESSER funding (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief). While this remains 6.6 percentage points below the goal, it represents a notable improvement of 4.1 percentage points since the starting benchmark.



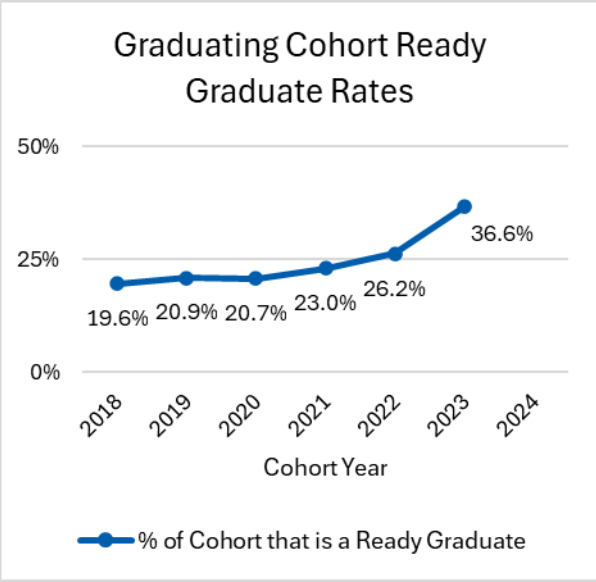
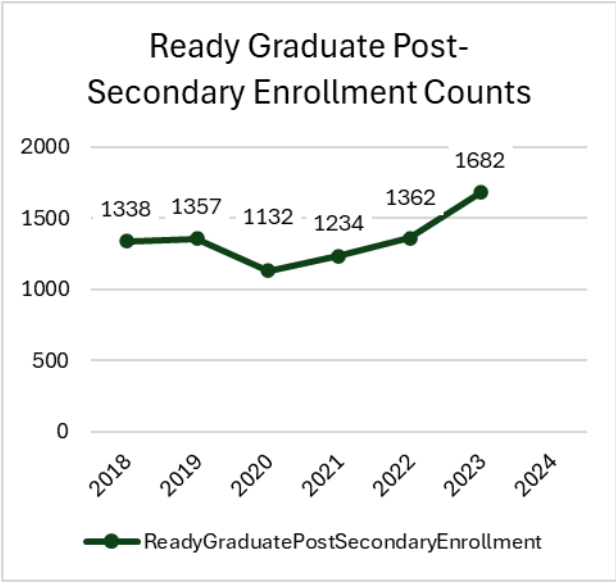
Out of the roughly 50 schools that graduate students in Memphis-Shelby County Schools, 26.7% achieved a 90 percent or higher graduation rate, staying relatively stable over time.



The post-secondary enrollment rate for our graduating cohorts, specifically those classified as “Ready Graduates” under the TN Department of Education standards, has declined since the 2019 benchmark, ending at 61.2%. The most recent data available is for the 2023 graduating cohort, as post-secondary enrollment is tracked for 15 months following high school graduation and Ready Graduate data is lagged by one year. Data for the 2024 graduating cohort will become available in early 2025.



Over the past five years, MSCS has experienced a 25-percentage point decline in the percentage of college-and-career-ready graduates who enroll in post-secondary institutions within 15 months of graduation. This decrease aligns with the national post-pandemic trend, where undergraduate enrollment dropped by approximately 6% (Berg et al., 2024). Nationally, students from low-income households were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with a higher percentage canceling their college plans compared to their peers (Best Colleges, 2024).



It is important to note that MSCS has steadily increased the percentage of each cohort that meets the Ready Graduate status defined by the state. The 2023 cohort, the last cohort with available data, had the highest Ready Graduate rate at 36.6 percent. Additionally, MSCS had the highest count of students enrolled in post-secondary institutions for a graduating cohort only using the 15-month enrollment data. It was an increase of 290 college-going students over the baseline.

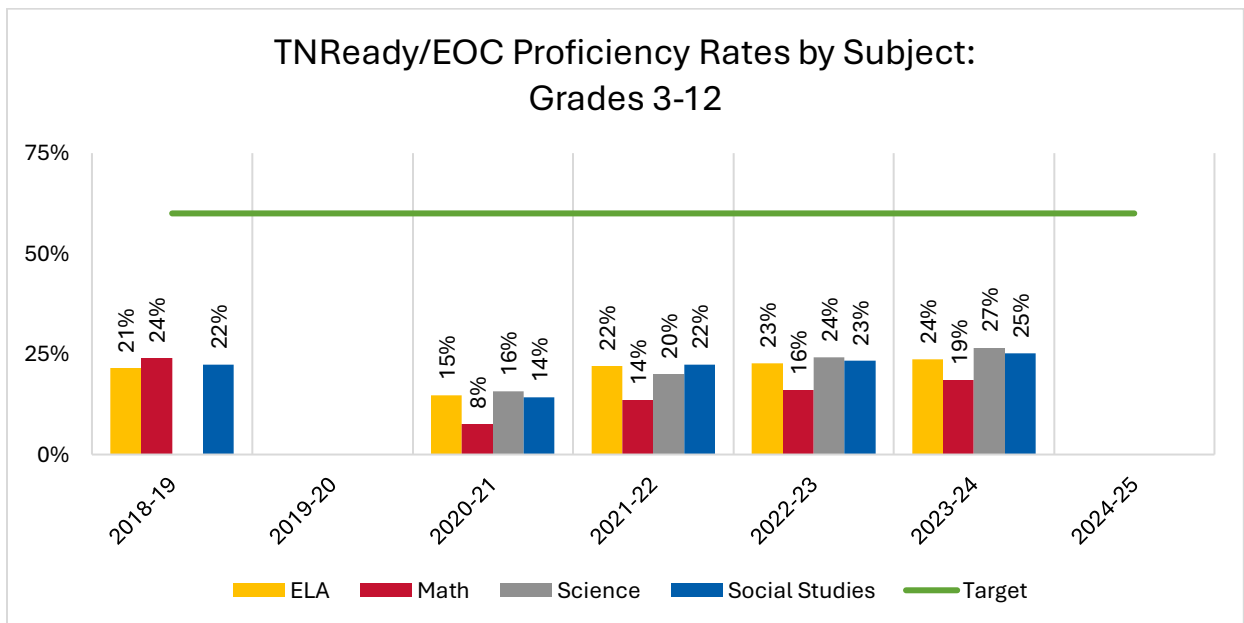
Cohort Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Target	Difference
Graduation Rate	79.3%	77.7%	77.7%	80.1%	81.5%	83.4%	—	90%	-6.6
Ready Graduate Rate	20.9%	20.7%	23.0%	26.2%	36.6%	—	—	—	—
Ready Grad Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate	86.2%	71.8%	73.2%	71.3%	61.2%	—	—	100%	-38.8

Priority 3: Develop Teachers, Leaders and Central Office to Drive Student Success

2025 Goal: 60 percent of students are proficient on the TNReady assessment.

2025 Progress: Overall, 22.8% of students demonstrated proficiency on the TNReady assessments taken, 37.2 percentage points below the target.

The District saw major setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic with scores dropping as much as 16 percentage points (Math) between 2018-19 and 2020-21. The District fell short of the 60 percent target in all tested subjects (ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies). Math had the lowest percentage with 19 percent of students scoring proficiently on the TNReady assessments. Science had the highest proficiency rates at 27%. All subjects saw slight gains from the 2022-23 school year by one to three percentage points following the upward gains earned across subjects since 2020-21.¹



In ELA, grades 3-12 proficiency rates (23.7%) have surpassed their pre-pandemic levels (21.5%) but fell short of the 60 percent target by 36.3 percentage points. High school proficiency rates were the highest of all grade bands at 27.9% and the lowest was grades 6-

¹ Note the COVID-19 pandemic year (2019-20) in which the TNReady was not taken.

8 at 17.6%. Math scores overall (grades 3-12) have decreased since 2018-19 but have shown consistent gains since 2021-22 (up 4.9 percentage points). High school Math had the lowest proficiency rate at 14.8% followed by grades 6-8 at 16.2%. The percentage of all students proficient in Science (26.6%) has increased across all grade bands since 2020-21 but fell short of the target rate by 33.4 percentage points. In Social Studies, all grade bands (25.1% proficient) have surpassed their pre-pandemic levels (22.4%).

Grade Range	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Target	Difference
ELA							
3-12	21.5%	14.8%	22.0%	22.8%	23.7%	60%	-36.34
3-5	24.3%	14.7%	23.4%	24.2%	26.7%	60%	-33.28
6-8	18.7%	12.7%	18.7%	18.4%	17.6%	60%	-42.39
9-12	21.0%	18.3%	24.9%	27.0%	27.9%	60%	-32.12
Math							
3-12	24.0%	7.5%	13.6%	16.0%	18.5%	60%	-41.48
3-5	34.5%	9.7%	18.2%	22.0%	23.9%	60%	-36.10
6-8	22.5%	7.6%	13.1%	14.8%	16.2%	60%	-43.77
9-12	13.1%	4.8%	8.8%	10.3%	14.8%	60%	-45.22
Science							
3-12	--	15.8%	20.1%	24.2%	26.6%	60%	-33.41
3-5	--	15.7%	23.5%	26.3%	28.4%	60%	-31.61
6-8	--	13.6%	16.3%	22.2%	24.3%	60%	-35.67
9-12	--	22.9%	20.1%	23.4%	27.4%	60%	-32.61
Social Studies							
3-12	22.4%	14.1%	22.3%	23.3%	25.1%	60%	-34.89
6-8	23.8%	13.8%	22.4%	23.1%	25.2%	60%	-34.79
9-12	14.5%	16.6%	21.6%	25.4%	23.9%	60%	-36.12

A full breakdown of proficiency rates by individual grades and grade bands is available in the Appendix.

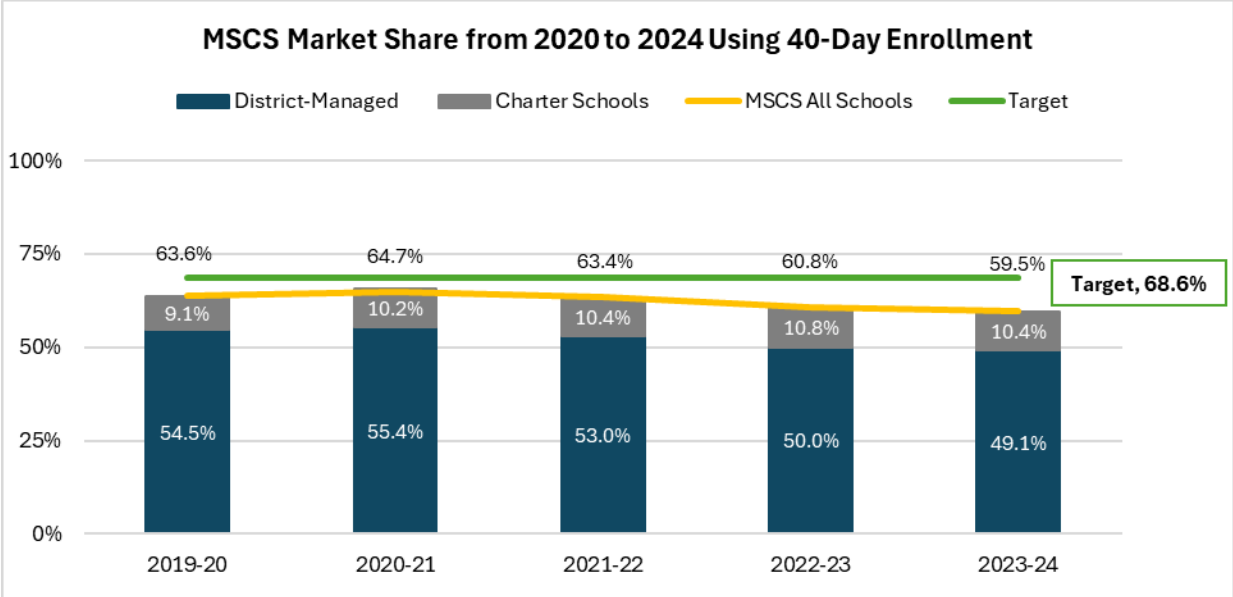
Priority 4: Expand High-Quality School Options

2025 Goal: MSCS student market share increases by 5 percentage points.

2025 Progress: 59.9 percent of school-aged children in Shelby County were enrolled in MSCS in the fall of 2023², falling short of the goal by 9.1 percentage points.

² American Community Survey 5-year estimates are subject to change after the date of publication, which means market share is an approximation based on the best available data at a given time. The 2020-2021

Memphis-Shelby County Schools’ student market share was estimated to be 59.5 percent based on Pre-K-12 enrollment counts on the 40th day of the 2023-24 school year and the most recent U.S. Census estimates of the county-wide school population. This means that less than 60% of all school-aged children in Shelby County are enrolled in the District. MSCS’ market share has decreased since 2021-22, although this calculation may fluctuate as the Census’ school-aged population estimates are revised. The U.S. Census Bureau is scheduled to release updated census data in March 2025.



MSCS has restructured school network support into three cohorts: SOAR, IGNITE, and SUPE. These cohorts are divided into seven networks each with dedicated central office personnel to support schools with their specific needs. This restructuring promotes regular communication and collaboration between school-based staff and central office support staff and streamlines overall District efficiency by dedicating specific staff from various key departments to individual school networks. These departments include Legal, CTE, Enrollment, Finance, Family Engagement, Talent Management, and Operations. This restructuring and targeted support may lead to increased enrollment for MSCS.

MSCS has authorized 55 active charter schools serving over 19,000 students – over 18 percent of all students served in the District. In the 2024-25 school year, two new schools opened. One hundred percent of schools in the charter portfolio scored a Level 4 (Excellent) or above in operations based on the MSCS Operations Scorecard, indicating they are in compliance with non-academic requirements and using resources efficiently and ethically to serve students.

market share percentage was updated with the 5-year estimates date from 2019. Census Bureau has not yet released results for 2024. Expected release March 2025.

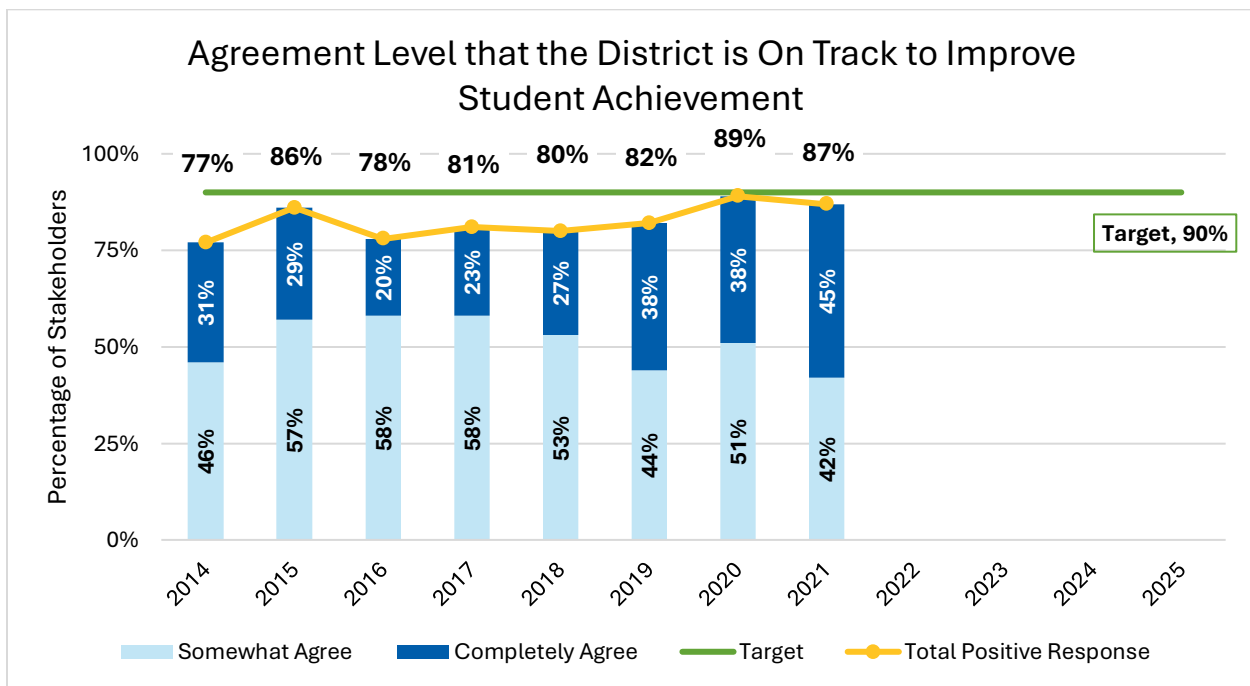
Priority 5: Mobilize Family & Community Partners

2025 Goal: Community confidence in MSCS increases to 90 percent.

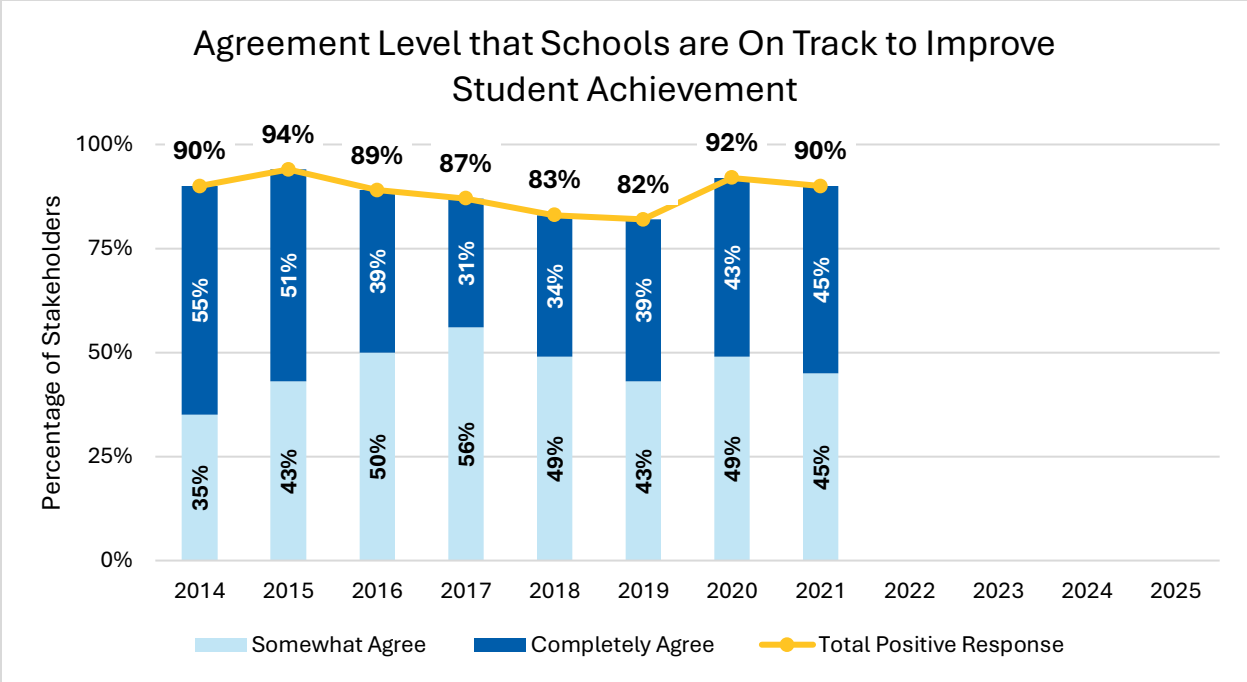
2025 Progress: In 2021, the last year of available data, 87 percent of surveyed staff and community stakeholders agree that the then Superintendent and the central office were on track to improve student achievement.

The District did not launch its Community Confidence survey in the last three years with the last iteration showcasing data from 2020–21. Based on these results, the District was just shy of hitting the 90 percent target but showed the highest ratings in the last two years of the survey.

Based on MSCS' most recent annual survey of parents from the summer of 2021, community members, and District staff, 87% of stakeholders were confident in the District's efforts to improve student achievement and progress toward Destination 2025 goals. While this represents a slight decrease from 2020, the percentage of stakeholders who "completely agreed" increased by 7 points, marking the second-highest level of agreement in the eight-year period. The District's rating includes responses related to the Central Office and the Superintendent.



Confidence in MSCS schools also remained high, with 90% of stakeholders agreeing that schools were on track to improve student achievement, a slight decrease from 2020 (down two percentage points). Notably, the percentage of stakeholders who "completely agreed" rose to 45% in 2021.



The survey asked MSCS parents about their level of agreement on whether *their child's* school was on track to improve student achievement. The last year of the survey, 90% of parents expressed agreement, which reflected a 2-point decrease from 2020. These findings underscore the District's progress towards meeting its Destination 2025 goal of 90% confidence, though the last three years of data were not collected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Memphis-Shelby County Schools did not fully meet the ambitious goals set in the Destination 2025 strategic plan, it has made notable progress in many key areas, especially post-pandemic. The global health crisis undeniably impacted student achievement and college-going behavior, but MSCS has demonstrated resilience, with some areas even surpassing pre-pandemic performance. As we close the chapter on Destination 2025, MSCS remains steadfast in its commitment to high standards and continued growth for the next generation. MSCS is poised to build on these gains, focusing on the immediate needs of students through the support of schools, central office, families, and the larger Memphis and Shelby County communities to ensure every student can reach their full potential.

Appendix

TNReady (TCAP & EOC) Assessment Proficiency Ratings

2023-2024		
Content Area*	Grade	Proficiency Rate
Science	3	30.0%
Science	4	31.8%
Science	5	23.6%
Science	6	24.7%
Science	7	29.0%
Science	8	18.8%
Science	9	40.3%
Science	10	22.6%
Science	11	20.6%
Science	12	15.5%
Social Studies	6	26.0%
Social Studies	7	28.1%
Social Studies	8	21.4%
Social Studies	9	8.7%
Social Studies	10	15.3%
Social Studies	11	28.4%
Social Studies	12	16.5%

2023-2024		
Content Area*	Grade	Proficiency Rate
ELA	3	27.5%
ELA	4	29.0%
ELA	5	23.8%
ELA	6	18.3%
ELA	7	19.8%
ELA	8	14.7%
ELA	9	19.9%
ELA	10	38.0%
ELA	11	8.7%
ELA	12	2.8%
Math	3	26.1%
Math	4	23.4%
Math	5	22.2%
Math	6	13.6%
Math	7	17.5%
Math	8	17.7%
Math	9	13.6%
Math	10	18.8%
Math	11	12.5%
Math	12	6.6%

*EOC assessments above are categorized by their primary subject area in alignment with TNDOE.

2023-2024	
EOC Assessment	Proficiency Rate
Algebra I	13.6%
Algebra II	13.9%
Biology I	27.4%
English I	19.7%
English II	36.7%
Geometry	19.9%
Integrated Math I	16.9%
Integrated Math II	22.6%
Integrated Math III	23.7%
US History	23.9%

References

Berg, B., Causey, J., Cohen, J., Randolph, B., & Shapiro, D. *Current Term Enrollment Estimates: Fall 2023*, Herndon, VA: NSCRC. January 2024.

BestColleges. (2024). *College enrollment decline: Pandemic impact & trends*. BestColleges. Retrieved January 15, 2025, from <https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/college-enrollment-decline/#pandemic-college-enrollment-decline>

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