



**SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS**  
**Superintendent**  
**Executive Summary**

**Dorsey E. Hopson, II**



**Progress Update**  
2015-2016



## THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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160 s. Hollywood Street • Memphis, TN 38112 • (901) 416-5444 • Fax (901) 416-5578 • [www.scsk12.org](http://www.scsk12.org)

September 20, 2016

Dear Board Members, Colleagues and Community,

Thank you for the opportunity to lead and serve Shelby County Schools. As a result of the outstanding work of our school leaders, teachers and staff, we can all be proud of our District's accomplishments during the 2015-2016 school year.

We have set clear goals on how we will improve student achievement and with your feedback, we developed a thoughtful strategic plan to support our mission. When we reach our goals, not only will the lives and futures of countless students be improved, but our entire community will also experience a positive transformation. This executive summary describes our achievements towards Destination 2025 and, as in previous years, it's divided into six categories:

1. Board Relationships
2. Community Relationships & Communications
3. Staff and Personnel Relationships
4. Facilities and Finance
5. Vision
6. Student Achievement

Overall, our actions continue to follow our guiding principle of 'Students First,' and we are now in a better position to provide the necessary resources to our schools due to the unprecedented support by the community during the budget process. Additionally, our nationally recognized iZone model continues to prove its effectiveness and the launch of the new Whitehaven Empowerment Zone is providing an incredible level of support to schools in that area.

Our main goals for this new school year are: to support our principals, teachers and administrative personnel with meaningful and necessary professional development opportunities; reduce our student chronic absenteeism rate and ensure our classrooms have highly qualified teachers. We are also committed to keeping our SCS family focused on achieving Destination 2025 so we can ensure 80 percent of students are college- or career-ready, 90 percent of our students graduate on time and 100 percent of those graduates are enrolled in an post-secondary educational opportunity by 2025.

We are making a difference in our city, and I hope that we continue to collaborate to move in the direction that allows us to not only succeed, but be the greatest urban district in the country. It is my pleasure to serve as Superintendent of Shelby County Schools and I look forward to building on our successes and providing a better future for our students.

Sincerely,

Dorsey E. Hopson, II  
Superintendent

# Organization of the Report

The key performance indicators of this report are presented in six categories. Each category demonstrates the progress that has been made over the last year, while at the same time allowing the Superintendent to identify challenges and address them when necessary. These key performance indicators are presented as a result of the most current data, analytics and information available to the District.

## Categories

1. Board Relations
2. Community Relations & Communications
3. Staff & Personnel Relations
4. Facilities & Finance
5. Vision
6. Student Achievement



# Destination 2025: Goals & Priority

## GRADUATING COLLEGE-READY



**80%**

of seniors will be college-or career-ready

**90%**

of students will graduate on time

**100%**

of college-or career-ready graduates enroll in post-secondary opportunities

Priority 1



Strengthen Early Literacy

Priority 2



Improve Post-Secondary Readiness

Priority 3



Develop Teachers, Leaders & Central Office

Priority 4



Expand High Quality School Options

Priority 5



Mobilize Family & Community Partners



DESTINATION 2025





# 1. Board Relationships

To ensure that the District has an intense focus on meeting the needs of all children, the Board and the Superintendent must continue to develop a trusting, positive, collaborative, team-oriented relationship. Superintendent Hopson has established relationships with each Board member and the Board as a whole. Throughout the year, he discussed issues and matters of governance, management, values and beliefs, as well as the goals and priorities of Destination 2025. In addition, Superintendent Hopson engaged in multiple courageous conversations with the Board and presented difficult, but necessary, recommendations to ensure Shelby County Schools continues to have positive growth.



## Key Performance Indicators:

- Over the last three years, Superintendent Hopson has continued to create a collaborative working relationship with the Board. He understands that, individually and collectively the Board he serves is a critical partner to improving academic performance and making Shelby County Schools the greatest district in the country.
- Continues to boast a 100-percent attendance rate for all Board meetings and work sessions.
- Takes times to do personal sit-downs with each Board member to help them understand specific key issues. (Ex. school closures, budget, Destination 2025 progress)
- Keeps Board members informed on projects, initiatives, activities, programs, etc. via his directive to the Chief of Staff to provide bi-weekly briefings. These are distributed on Fridays in an effort to provide regular progress report updates about all matters related to District operations.
- Appropriately involves Board members for input when making key cabinet level appointments. (Ex. Natalia Powers, Chief of Communications and Community Engagement, and Lin Johnson, Chief Financial Officer)
- The Superintendent maintains a positive productive relationship with the Board by being highly responsive, as well as providing ease and frequency of access.





## 2. Community Relations and Communications

Public schools require a deep commitment from the entire community to be successful. It is critical that, as an organization, we understand the culture, history and expectations of the entire community. Working with staff, Superintendent Hopson has been proactive and deliberate in reaching out to our stakeholders. This past year, there was an intense focus on establishing a sense of urgency and transparency in the way we engage and communicate both internally and externally.

### Key Performance Indicators:

- An area of focus during the last year was to improve the District's digital communications to expand the way our internal and external audiences were receiving important information about our District. Some of the improvements in this area include:
  - Developed timelines and streamlined the process for internal communications to increase readership.
  - Relunched our Teacher Weekly newsletter, which reaches 11,000+ SCS employees and currently has a 40-percent open rate.
  - Increased our website views by 55 percent.
  - Launched a series of training sessions to assist schools in the development of their own communications channels, marketing strategies and enhancing their social media presence. Currently, Shelby County Schools has a more than 61,000 social media followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
  - Created a social media presence via new website (Voiceofscs.com), Facebook (Voice of SCS) and Twitter (@voiceofscs) for C19TV and 88.5FM.
  - SCS radio station 88.5FM has improved average weekly ratings by 14,734 listeners as of July 2016 compared to July 2015.



- The Family and Community Engagement team conducted 191 needs assessment meetings for our schools to identify priorities and resources for each school. The main purpose of this analysis is to match businesses, non-profits and service organizations to schools by providing resources specifically needed for their respective student population.
- Through a strong partnership with News Channel 3 and the faith-based community, SCS students continue to benefit from the Team Read program, which focuses on helping second graders improve their sight words vocabulary. To date, 1,033 volunteers have signed up to serve as TEAM Read Coaches. This count includes a number of retired teachers, principals and former employees.
- Determined to continue to be a strong advocate for public school children, Superintendent Hopson hosted a variety of community-based meetings and conversations with multiple stakeholder groups. Some of those included:

- 33 community events
- 24 school rezoning/closure meetings
- 32 school-based events
- 13 District-wide events



- The District continues to develop and expand partnerships with other local institutions and community organizations like the Memphis Housing Authority, Women's Foundations of Greater Memphis and others in supporting families residing in Foote Homes and additional areas in the 38126 zip code. Also, we have been developing collaborative grant proposals with the University of Memphis to offer more college ready opportunities to our students while creating new programming with the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) about career tracks for our children.
- This past year, Superintendent Hopson made a strong effort to ensure that SCS enhances its relationship with the Hispanic community. We partnered with Latino Memphis during their annual Congreso event to have meaningful and courageous conversations about improving how our community supports newcomer families. We also had more than 900 high school students attend the Congreso High School Rally, where they participated in sessions about college and career readiness. We improved our partnership with the Mexican Consulate to ensure that our schools are providing the necessary documentation when the consulate visits our county.

- We realize that it is key for SCS to expand community partnerships that go beyond the classroom. With this mind, we partnered with the Green Schools Project, Memphis Public Works, County Government and local organizations to clean up 21 schools in blighted areas so children can have clean and safe paths as they walk to school.
- Superintendent Hopson also worked to strengthen the District’s relationships with the faith-based community. To this end, Superintendent Hopson hosted several meetings with faith-based leaders to discuss the District’s progress and build support for the District.



### 3. Staff & Personnel Relationships

Superintendent Hopson has a deep understanding of how the organization operates, including what’s working well and where there are opportunities for improvement. One of his main objectives this past school year was to ensure that the District moved away from silos and started to work as a cross-functional team.

#### Key Performance Indicators:

- To better support our staff, we recently released an online training system, Star12, which gives principals and managers the tools needed to be more effective, especially in the areas of leadership, communication, technology and others.
- Superintendent Hopson recognizes the challenges surrounding staff morale. For that reason, he tasked our Human Resources team to increase success in this area by developing new and creative solutions to improve staff appreciation efforts, two-way communication and details of a total rewards system. This past year, he hosted the following activities and events in an effort to show appreciation to our teachers and employees:
  - Hosted two “Teachers Rock” events that drew more than 4,000 teachers. The first event took place in December 2015 at various Malco movie theater locations and the second one in June 2016 at Main Event as the culminating appreciation activity of the school year.
  - In a partnership with the SchoolSeed Foundation, we opened the new “Teacher Toolbox,”



a school supply center that allows teachers to shop for free classroom supplies throughout the year. The store is a key component towards relieving the extra costs that teachers spend on supplies for their students while providing much needed materials to aid in their learning.



- During the summer, central office employees enjoyed fun activities like food trucks, ice cream socials and small team appreciation events. More importantly, they came together to support schools during the summer and first few weeks of school by volunteering in the car lines, cafeterias, classrooms, etc. and even doing some beautification projects and collecting supplies and uniforms.
- During last year's difficult budget process, Superintendent Hopson prioritized the importance of compensating our educators appropriately. Teachers who receive a TEM 3 or higher based on the 2015-2016 school year will receive a 3-percent salary increase.
- Obtaining input directly from teachers and principals is key for Superintendent Hopson. Throughout the year, he met monthly with the Principal Leadership Group to hear concerns and also ideas on how to improve our system. Also, "Teacher Chats" were conducted at approximately 25 schools as a way to improve employee morale and increase educator voice to support decision-making. As part of the effort, Superintendent Hopson visited schools before the school day for candid discussions about current District topics.
- We continue to believe that strong relationships with our teachers' associations are mutually beneficial. Superintendent Hopson regularly obtained perspective, guidance and critical feedback on a variety of issues from our associations throughout the school year and proactively shared information related to employment, policy, programming and other developments to ensure our educators were well informed.





## 4. Facilities & Finance

Superintendent Hopson understands that in order to meet the needs of all of our students, it is critical that Facilities and Finance collaborate effectively. Considering the current strengths and opportunities for improvement and, in light of the recent budget challenges, this has and will continue to be a priority area. Superintendent Hopson has analyzed and established ways to be more effective and efficient to maximize the support and services to schools.



### Key Performance Indicators:

- The annual financial audit was completed and filed with the TN Comptroller before December 31, 2015. This audit won two internationally recognized awards – “gold standards” GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program and ASBO Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.
- The fiscal year 2015-2016 budget was approved by the Board and County Commission on July 9, 2015. The budget won two internationally recognized awards – “gold standards” GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program and ASBO Meritorious Budget Award. The State reporting for the budget was completed by the deadline of August 1, 2015.
- Superintendent Hopson has ensured that expenditures are within the limits approved by the Board, adhering to the policies and tightening internal controls. Consequently, a surplus is expected in the General Fund for fiscal year 2015-2016. Under his leadership, the District provided monthly financial reports to each Cabinet member.
- At the direction of Superintendent Hopson, staff has adhered to the Board policy around carry-forward encumbrances, which prevented the District from inflating next year’s budget with roll over purchase orders.
- Superintendent Hopson led a budget process that mobilized parents, teachers, school leaders, business leaders, elected officials, community partners and employees through the ‘Students Deserve More’ campaign. As a result of this campaign, we received \$22 million in county funding for fiscal year 2016-2017, the largest increase the county has ever provided the Shelby County School District. Superintendent led the effort with the County Commission to rethink how the wheel tax funds have been allocated to school districts. Consequently, the County Commission strengthened the law around the use of wheel tax to ensure that the additional wheel tax reaches the classrooms.

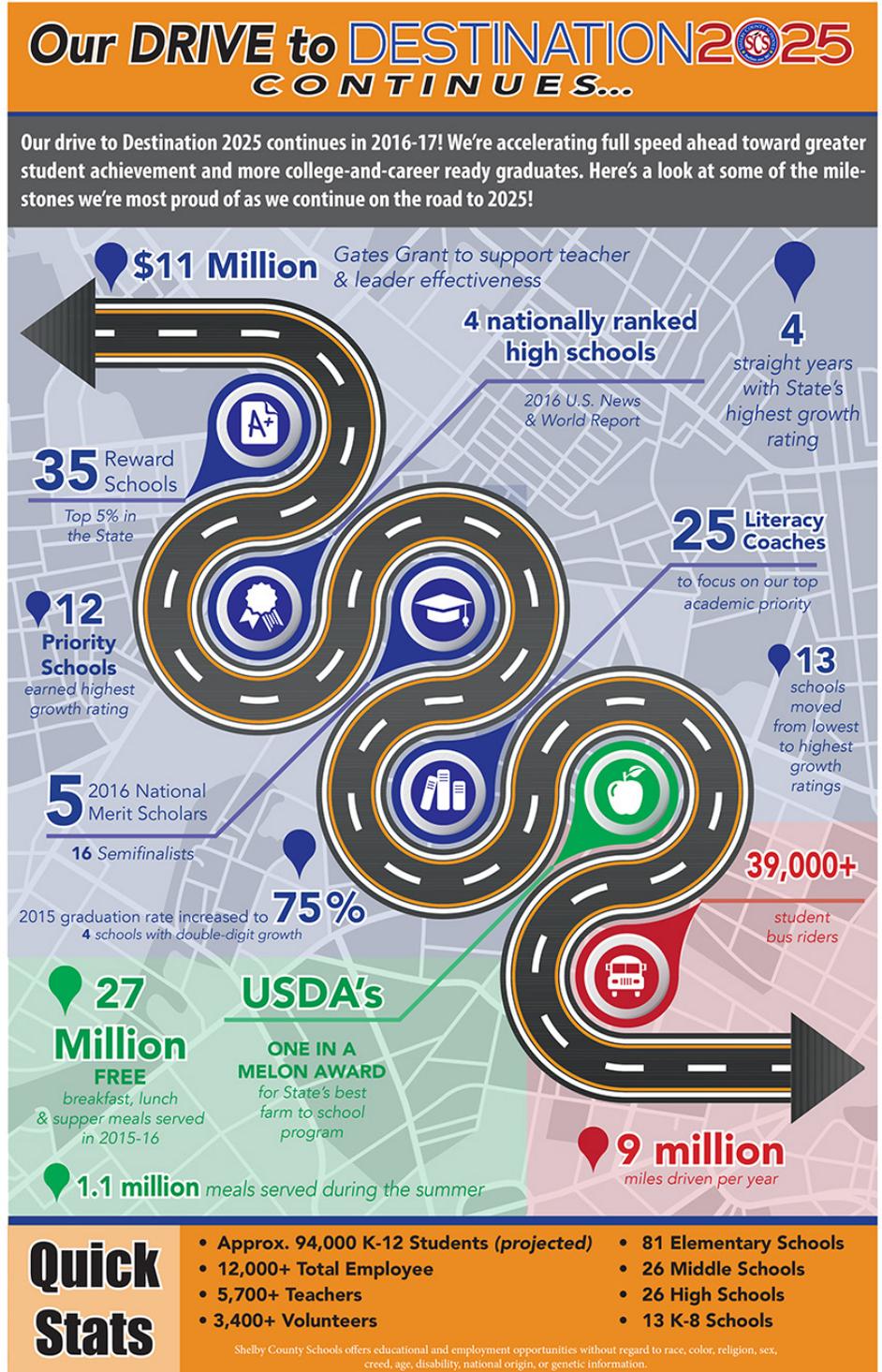
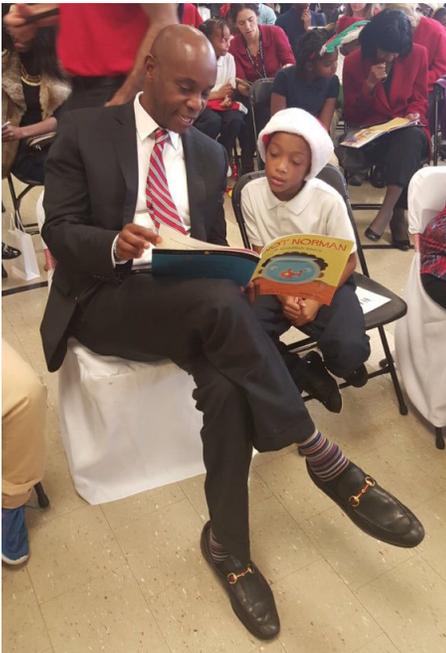
- Starting in October, the Chief Financial Officer will be providing regular budgetary reports to the Board through a new financial dashboard that provides a real-time snapshot of the District's expenditures and revenues. This new tool will allow for the Superintendent and Board Members to have ongoing updates of all fiscal matters, while at the same time track the monetary resources that support our schools.
- The District conducted a deferred maintenance study of all buildings to identify and prioritize capital needs. As a result, the District received approximately \$26 million of capital funds in fiscal year 2015-2016 to address our deferred maintenance.
- Under the Superintendent's guidance, we have systemically upgraded and maintained our facilities to provide students clean, safe and efficient learning environments. The administration developed and executed a strategic facilities improvement plan. This included a comprehensive facilities assessment study, which was completed this past year on all District property to assist with the Superintendent's footprint planning process.
- Facilities completed nine projects that were outstanding since the initial allocation of funding of \$46 million in 2014. All capital improvements resulted in improved facility conditions, including one new school location, Westhaven ES, and four new school additions (Berclair ES, Cordova ES, Wells Station ES and Chimneyrock ES).
- Beautification projects were performed at nine schools across the District, which involved interior and exterior projects, including painting, landscaping and some specific needed repairs.
- The project for the replacement of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is currently underway. This new system is of the utmost importance to the core business function and impacts all students and parents.
- This year, Superintendent Hopson continued his commitment to upgrade the technology resources available to teachers and students with the purchase of 6,500 new computing devices. In addition, we made significant strides by launching the new Data Warehouse, online student registration and Ed-Fi.





## 5. Vision

Our work is rooted in the belief that effective teachers and school leaders make the greatest impact on student achievement. Our schools provide a rigorous and engaging curriculum to support Superintendent Hopson's ambitious strategic goals for college and career readiness. We believe that empowering parents and stakeholders to be involved in the education of our students will make our entire community stronger.



# Destination 2025 Priority Areas Progress Report

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## Priority 1: Strengthen Early Literacy

**Progress:** We continued supporting our teachers learning the Comprehensive Literacy Improvement Plan (CLIP) to ensure all of our students have the opportunity to learn grade-level material. To that end, teachers and coaches were given access to high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials and planning tools, improved curriculum maps and updated textbooks and supplemental resources.

## Priority 2: Improve Post-Secondary Readiness

**Progress:** We launched an Early Warning System (EWS), which provides high school teachers and leaders with predictive, real-time data to identify students who are at risk of graduating on time. In addition, we increased the overall District graduation rate and the number of students who qualify for TN Promise and applied for FAFSA.

## Priority 3: Develop Teachers, Leaders and Central Office

**Progress:** We increased the percentage of core teachers attending District Learning Day (DLD) while providing higher quality professional development opportunities to help them improve teaching the College- and Career-Ready (CCR) standards.

## Priority 4: Expand High Quality School Options

**Progress:** We expanded several dual enrollment and dual credit programs in the areas of automotive repair, machining, health science and technology while focusing efforts on increasing the number of students earning IB diplomas and completing dual enrollment courses. We also launched the Whitehaven Empowerment Zone as a proactive intervention strategy for five schools, and our iZone enrollment grew by 15 percent.

## Priority 5: Mobilize Family and Community Partners

 **Progress:** As a result of the reorganization of the Department of Family and Community Engagement, a new strategic plan has been developed to align community partnerships and academics. During last year's budget process, Superintendent Hopson led an unprecedented effort through the Students Deserve More campaign that mobilized the community and resulted in a \$22 million investment by the Shelby County Commission.

## Innovation Zone (iZone):

- Our iZone turnaround model continues to lead all State turnaround efforts in student growth, according to a Vanderbilt Study released in December 2015. In fact, several school districts, including DC Public Schools and Nashville Public Schools, have visited our iZone schools so they can utilize some of our strategies to support their schools. Since 2013, iZone enrollment has grown by 15 percent (more than 1,300 students). Only 10 (26 percent) SCS Priority schools will remain in 2016-2017 that are not part of the iZone.



## Whitehaven Empowerment Zone:

- Under the leadership of Superintendent Hopson, a new turnaround model for schools that are at risk of being placed on the State's Priority list. The innovative pilot, known as the Empowerment Zone, kicked off this school year under the supervision of Dr. Vincent Hunter, principal of Whitehaven High School. The proactive intervention strategy will target up to five schools in the Whitehaven community, beginning with Havenview Middle School and A. Maceo Walker Middle School in 2016-17.

## Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Grant:

- Our successful implementation of the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness grant supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, afforded us the unprecedented opportunity to submit and be awarded a No-Cost Extension (NCE) for \$11 million. With this award, SCS will continue to support the work of providing effective teachers to every child in Shelby County Schools. Specifically, this extension of the original grant allows us to remain focused on the following nine key strategic focus areas:



1. Teacher evaluation as development grounded in TNCore College and Career Ready Standards
2. Building human capital capacity in schools and central office
3. Standards-aligned instructional materials
4. Standards-aligned, effective professional learning
5. Coordinated support from the central office
6. Instructional leadership teams, including an explicit focus on principal effectiveness
7. Creating financial and cultural conditions for success
8. Ensuring sustainability by building community support, including an explicit focus on teacher leadership and engagement
9. Becoming a fast adopter in the state of Tennessee



## 6. Student Achievement

Superintendent Hopson has been a champion for ensuring that all employees understand that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that all students graduate from our schools college-and career-ready. To ensure classroom instruction occurs at high levels, teachers must have high quality instructional materials, standards aligned curriculum maps, and systems and symbols designed to facilitate optimal learning opportunities. Teachers need tools to monitor student progress, as well as evidence-based interventions to deploy when necessary. Superintendent Hopson has made it a priority to focus all discussions and decisions around what is best for our students.

### Key Performance Indicators:

- Under Superintendent Hopson's leadership, Shelby County Schools improved student proficiency in nine of 10 tested subjects in 2015 and outpaced or equaled state growth in seven of 10 subjects.
- This past school year, we launched the Early Warning System (EWS), which provides high school teachers and school leaders with predictive, real-time data to identify students who are at risk of not graduating on time. Using academic, attendance and circumstantial risk factors, such as mobility, this tool provides educators with specific indicators of where students may be struggling so that they can deploy supports and interventions tailored to each student's needs.
- As we continue to go full speed ahead towards improving student achievement and preparing our students to be college-ready, the following milestones were reached as part of our commitment to Destination 2025:
  - Increased the overall graduation rate to 75 percent, with 20 high schools achieving a graduation rate over 80 percent and two high schools with 100 percent.
  - 88 percent of seniors completed the FAFSA application, and 85-percent of our seniors completed a Tennessee Promise application.
  - Post-secondary enrollment among SCS graduates improved from 53.9 percent to 58.2 percent in 2015. This increase is equivalent to 295 more students who could earn \$2 million to \$6 million more collectively.



- Increased enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses from 2,396 students in 2014 to 3,961 students in 2015. Additionally, the AP course pass rate has increased to 43 percent.
- Achieved a 94-percent pass rate for students enrolled in Dual Enrollment. Our schools have increased the amount of students enrolled in Dual Enrollment courses to 1,203 students taking 2,649 courses.
- Increased the amount of students earning International Baccalaureate (IB) diplomas from 58 percent to 70 percent.
- Memphis Virtual School had a 95-percent student success rate and 93-percent course pass rate.
- Superintendent Hopson continues to encourage all teachers, principals, staff members and the community to support the goals set forth in Destination 2025. We realize that we have a long road ahead, but below are some highlights of the efforts that we made towards preparing our students to be career-ready:
  - In partnership with the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce, more than 300 STEM students participated in National Manufacturing Day Industry Tours designed to create awareness of career opportunities in local manufacturing companies.
  - As a result of increased student interest and industry demands, we developed new programs to better align with career readiness opportunities that benefit our graduates including:
    - Diesel technology dual credit program at Trezevant High School
    - Agriculture program at Southwind High School
    - Broadcasting and media communications program at Middle College High School
  - Expanded post-secondary partnerships to increase college and career readiness opportunities with local colleges and universities:
    - Launched Dual Enrollment/dual credit program in Diesel, Automotive Repair and Advanced Manufacturing (Machining) with Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT)
    - Launched Dual Enrollment program in Health Science and Business Technology with Southwest Tennessee Community College

- During the last school year, we had 108 students complete 196 certifications in the Career Readiness Certification (CRC) pilot program. Over the last two years, we increased the number of students earning career certifications from 187 to 366.
- Increased CTE concentrator completion rate from 92.27 percent to 93.26 percent and our graduation rate in this program from 91.01 percent to 92.58 percent.
- Increased the percentage of core teachers reporting that District Learning Day (DLD) helped them improve teaching the CCR standards to 75 percent.
- Compared to this time last year, we have increased student attendance by the equivalent of 65,000 instructional days, and our schools have decreased suspensions by more than 6,300. However, Superintendent Hopson realizes that we have a large number of students who have attendance or truancy challenges and, for that reason SCS opened five Truancy Assessment Centers which resulted in the reduction of truant students. In addition, Superintendent Hopson and District Attorney Amy Weirich are co-chairs of the Attendance and Truancy Task Force to assist families with chronically absent students. As part of this effort, we are partnering for the second year with Seeding Success and the Grizzlies on the Represent Every Day attendance awareness/incentive campaign.
- Awarded a \$5 million grant to implement the Project Prevent Program in our identified high-risk schools, (Kirby High/Middle, Craigmont High/Middle).
- Produced a new video, titled "Guiding Principles to Effective Interaction with Law Enforcement" to prepare students about how to respond to law enforcement.





# Letters of Support



Representative Mark White

Supt Hopson,

8-6-2016

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME LAST THURSDAY TO DISCUSS YOUR CONCERNS REGARDING OUR UPCOMING MEETING IN NASHVILLE. I WILL WORK TO MAKE SURE THOSE CONCERNS ARE ADDRESSED AND IN A COLLABORATIVE ATMOSPHERE. I APPRECIATE YOUR HARD WORK AND THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE DAILY. I VERY MUCH WANT OUR COMMUNITY TO PROSPER THROUGH EDUCATION WHICH IS THE

Dear Superintendent Hopson,  
I look forward to meeting with you on September 21st or 28th or both.

Please let me know what times might fit in to your busy schedule.

Warmly,

Jim Jagers

HAROLD FORD, JR. 6-27-16

Dorey.

Just re-read your CA commentary on what more we as a community could be / should be doing to prepare students better for life. I agree with the way you're approaching the challenge. Keep it up!

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES *foundation*

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October 20, 2015

Mr. Dorsey E. Hopson, II  
Superintendent  
Shelby County Public Schools  
160 South Hollywood Street  
Memphis, TN 38112

Dear Superintendent Hopson:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us during the *Education Learning Forum*. It was a pleasure to meet you and learn more about your district's Teacher and Leader Effectiveness work.

Your leadership has made a big difference in the lives of students and families. Despite big changes for everyone in the district, you stayed focused to ensure that every student has an effective teacher. As you near the end of the Intensive Partnership Site investment, we applaud your efforts to build capacity and sustainability and look forward to following your continued progress.

We greatly appreciate your partnership on this important work and are grateful for your dedication to the teachers, students, and families of Shelby County Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Bill Gates



Melinda Gates



# Shelby County Board of Commissioners

TERRY ROLAND

Commissioner

District 1

September 20, 2016

Shelby County Board of Commissioners

Attn: Chairman Melvin Burgess

160 N. Main Street, Suite 600

Memphis, TN 38130

Dear Chairman Burgess:

I wanted to take this opportunity to both wish you success as you begin to lead our body and to acknowledge a new and productive working relationship I was successfully able to foster during my tenure as Chairman.

I was pleasantly pleased to have Superintendent Dorsey Hopson open channels of communication between Shelby County Schools and the Board of Commissioners. He was very receptive to the Commissioners feedback and was always available to keep this body informed throughout our recent budget process. I admire him for making the hard fiscal decisions to close schools when some parents and neighborhood leaders were not in agreement. Even after the budget process the Superintendent continued to nurture the partnership as Shelby County Schools began the hard process of dealing with their OPEB issues.

Many times in government we do not acknowledge when a process is working well and I would like to personally thank Dorsey for his professional dedication to maintaining the dialogue that this body has requested in the past. I sincerely hope the relationship will continue as you lead this body.

Sincerely,

Terry Roland

Commissioner, District 1

Cc: All Commissioners  
Superintendent Hopson

VASCO A. SMITH, JR. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

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# Memphis-Shelby County Education Association

126 Flicker Street Memphis, Tennessee 38104 901-454-0966 Fax 901-454-9979

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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September 20, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

Superintendent Dorsey Hopson exudes leadership, scholarship, character and quality service; these attributes are essential to success in any area of human endeavor. His ability to lead a large, urban, minority, complex and severely financially challenged school district is outstanding and deserves praise! While Superintendent Hopson has faced huge challenges and has had to make unpopular and very difficult decisions, he has never wavered in his commitment of excellence to the students of the Shelby County School District. Educators have asked the tough questions, raised issues relative to salary increases and benefits, and to his credit, Superintendent Hopson has never shied away from nor refused an audience with educators; in fact, he regularly avails himself to attend a convening with teachers. The superintendent does have the natural human touch and gentleness that allays much of the anxiety that so often confronts him.

As the executive director of the Memphis Shelby County Education Association, I have had numerous occasions to appeal to and work with Superintendent Hopson; his intuitive insight into the preservation and sustained academic growth of this school district is keen. Thus, I believe that his efficacy and dedication to the preservation of Shelby County Schools is commendable.

Respectfully,

Keith O. Williams

# PeopleFirst Partnership



Executive Director, Lora Jobe, PeopleFirst Partnership

Executive Director, Mark Sturgis, Seeding Success

Board of Directors:

Chairman, Barbara Prescott, PhD

Sandra Allen, Director, Le Bonheur Center for Children and Parents

Malika Anderson, Superintendent, Achievement School District

Austin Baker, President, HRO Partners

Dr. Steve Bares, President & Executive Director, Memphis Bioworks Foundation

Jim Boyd, Executive Director, Pyramid Peak Foundation

Shannon Brown, Senior VP, Chief Human Resources and Diversity Officer, FedEx Express

Mike Carpenter, Executive Director, Plough Foundation

John Carson, President, Raymond James Financial

Nancy Coffee, President & CEO, New Memphis Institute

Roland Cole, Financial Advisor, Duncan-Williams

Mark Colombo, Senior Vice President, Solutions and Sales, FedEx Services

John Daniel, Executive Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer, First Horizon Financial Corporation

Edward Dobbs, President, Dobbs Management Service, LLC

Reid Dulberger, President & CEO, EDGE

Dr. Glenn Fenter, President, Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce

Scott Fountain, Senior Vice President & Chief Dev. Officer, Baptist Memorial Healthcare

Dr. Tracy Hall, President, Southwest Tennessee Community College

Carolyn Hardy, CEO Chism Hardy Enterprises, LLC

Dr. Hank Herrod, Executive Director, The Urban Child Institute

Dorsey Hopson, Superintendent, Shelby County Schools

Mayor Mark Luttrell, Shelby County

Keith Norman, Vice-President, Governmental Affairs, Baptist Memorial Health Care

Deano Orr, Executive Vice President, International Paper Foundation

Roland Rayner, Director, Tennessee College of Applied Technology, Memphis

Rev. Kenneth Robinson, M.D., President/CEO, United Way of the Mid-South

Dr. David Rudd, President, University of Memphis

Dr. Douglas Scarboro, Regional Executive, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Gary Shorb, CEO, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare

Teresa Sloyan, Executive Director, Hyde Family Foundations

Mayor Jim Strickland, City of Memphis

Blair Taylor, President, Memphis Tomorrow

Phil Trenary, President, Greater Memphis Chamber

Keisha Walker, Administrator, Office of Early Childhood & Youth, Shelby County Government

David Williams, President & CEO, Leadership Memphis

Kevin Woods, Executive Director, Workforce Investment Network

Shelby County School Board Members  
160 S. Hollywood  
Memphis, Tennessee 38112

Dear Board Members,

It is without reservation that I write this letter of support for Dorsey Hopson as Superintendent of Shelby County Schools. As Executive Director of PeopleFirst Partnership, I collaborate with Superintendent Hopson often on ways to improve education in our community from early childhood through college. His strong and effective communications have kept all stakeholders well-informed and engaged as the reputation, student achievement results, including effectively addressing identified achievement gaps and morale in the district have all been on the upswing.

Superintendent Hopson has been able to set high standards and expectations in his role as Superintendent while articulating the relevance to the public he serves. He is an exemplary leader who approaches educational leadership with a commitment to innovation and the pertinent best practices needed to move Shelby County Schools forward. Doing so could not be accomplished without his ability to develop a strong leadership team.

Superintendent Hopson's people skills have earned him a reputation as someone who listens to and respects opinions of others. My support of Superintendent Hopson extends well beyond his interpersonal communication skills and his ability to lead a management team. He has also demonstrated his strong belief in public education and the challenges that face it. He recognizes that public schools must succeed in providing the highest quality of educational services to meet the needs of all children. I am confident he will build on the past successes of Shelby County Schools and continue to move Shelby County towards Destination 2025.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Lora C. Jobe

Executive Director

PeopleFirst Partnership

[ljobe@peoplefirstpartnership.org](mailto:ljobe@peoplefirstpartnership.org)

901.507.4182



## CHRIST MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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*"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only..." James 1:22a*

*September 19, 2016*

*Dear Shelby County School Board Members*

*I consider it a pleasure to have been given the opportunity to work with Superintendent Dorsey Hopson and his staff during the 2016-2017 budget season. It was during this time, one of the most pivotal and challenging in the history of urban education in Memphis, TN that I caught a glimpse of his true leadership abilities. A natural leader, Superintendent Hopson demonstrated a unique blend of common sense and savvy as he partnered with congregational and community leaders to articulate looming district needs and its potential impact on the community at-large. Superintendent Hopson demonstrated superior professional abilities and I felt as though he walked hand-in-hand with us, the community, and never ceased to be accessible, transparent, and willing to provide clarity to important questions in a cogent manner.*

*Though gifted in many areas, I believe the work and service of Superintendent Hopson is best described in a quote from Robert F. Kennedy...*

*"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."*

*It was an honor to partner with Superintendent Hopson, someone I consider to be a consummate professional, to fight for the needs of our students. His passion for children and emotional connectedness to the vision of providing all students with access to the best quality education left an indubitable impression that I will never forget.*

*I look forward to working with Superintendent Hopson in the future.*

*Rev. Gina M. Stewart, D.Min., Senior Pastor  
Christ Missionary Baptist Church*

September 19, 2016

Dear Boss of the Superintendents,

Our superintendent helps kids by making sure that they learn and come to school everyday. He makes sure that kids have the right teacher. Thank you superintendent.

Thank you for taking care of the Shelby County kids and community. He is the best!

Love,

Addison Nichols



## Board Members

Teresa Jones, Chair

Shante K. Avant, Vice Chair

Kevin D. Woods

Miska Clay Bibbs

Chris Caldwell

Mike Kernell

Stephanie Love

Scott McCormick

William "Billy" Orgel

Dorsey E. Hopson II, Superintendent



Shelby County Schools offers educational and employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, creed, age, disability, national origin, or genetic information.