

# MATT WILTSHIRE



**Policy Priorities:** *Education*



## **I. Introduction**

## **II. 0-5: Early Education**

- Increase access to affordable, high-quality childcare options while building a career pipeline for certified childcare providers
- Create a resource to help families of young children connect with needed supports

## **III. K-12 Education**

- Recruit, retain, and increase support for teachers
- Make our schools safer

## **IV. High Education / Workforce**

- Increase the number of Nashvillians who earn a college degree or a workforce certification
- Amplify existing programs and deepen community partnerships so more students are able to connect with college opportunities and workforce certifications



# MATT WILTSHIRE



## Policy Priorities: *Education*

**“I’m running for Mayor so that every person in this city has a real opportunity to fulfill their dreams and realize their full potential”**

– Matt Wiltshire



## I. Introduction

If everyone in our community is going to have an equal shot at the American dream, every Nashville school needs to be a world-class school. As a graduate of Hume-Fogg High School whose own children have all attended (or, in the case of the youngest, will soon attend) MNPS for some or all of their schooling, Matt understands that leveling the playing field for every Nashville student is the most important thing we can do as a city.

Matt believes that Nashville’s public schools can and should be **the best in the country**, and as Mayor, he will take full responsibility for supporting and improving them. In collaboration with the school board and the Director of Schools, Matt will lay out a clear, unifying, equitable vision for what our schools can be that includes goals, timelines, and accountability. To determine whether schools are serving all students well and help ensure equity of opportunity and outcomes for our students, Matt will commit to **publishing and discussing comprehensive data** about the city’s public (traditional and charter) and private schools each year.

Matt knows that, today, we are asking our school system to “solve” a whole host of broader issues in our society – poverty, violence, hunger, trauma, and homelessness – while also educating kids who are bringing those challenges into the classroom. He will capitalize on the Mayor’s unique ability to **bring together the public, private, and nonprofit sectors**, and he will focus them on a common goal: providing additional support services so teachers can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning.

## II. 0-5: Early Education

Childcare is an important form of early education. When families have access to high-quality childcare, it profoundly benefits not only their children’s school readiness and overall development, but our economy and our community’s future. But today, Nashville is facing a childcare crisis.

Our current childcare system does not meet the needs of families or employers. A whopping 98% of Nashville parents of children under age five [reported](#) that inadequate childcare hurt their work productivity and/or career opportunities. In a state where childcare [costs more](#) than our average in-state college tuition, it is unsurprising that two-thirds of Nashville parents also [report](#) that affordability is a major challenge.

As Mayor, Matt will focus on ensuring that Nashville meets the needs of children in their most formative years – their first 1,000 days of life.

***Increase access to affordable, high-quality childcare options while building a career pipeline for certified childcare providers***

As Mayor, Matt will work to ensure that every child in Nashville has **access to high-quality early care**. To create more access, we need to train and hire more teachers.

Today, nearly half of Nashville parents [report](#) that finding quality care is a “major problem” that impacts their employment. Some of the parents struggling to find childcare are

**“We need to provide additional support services for kids, so that our teachers can focus on teaching and our kids can focus on learning in the classroom”**

– Matt Wiltshire, Tennessean, 05/24/23

teachers themselves. With Nashville facing both a childcare *and* a teacher shortage, Matt will partner with MNPS on a solution that could help address both issues:

**adding high-quality childcare centers to some of our high schools.**

This model is [already working](#) at Nashville’s STEM Prep, where the Little Wonders Early Learning Center offers high-quality childcare spots to both teachers and community members. Not only would expanding on this idea help parents and teachers, it would **create a career pathway** for high school students interested in becoming early childhood care providers.

Matt will also work to expand [partnerships](#) with organizations that support **home-based childcare providers serving Nashville’s communities of color**, e.g., the Raphah Institute. Not only do these providers play an important role in increasing childcare access, they are a critical solution for families that need childcare outside of daytime business hours.



### ***Create a resource to help families of young children connect with needed supports***

Thanks to the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, Nashville has a great [website](#) that features more than 2,600 resources for childcare providers. We need the same thing for families who are seeking childcare, or who want to connect with any of the other Nashville resources that exist to help navigate a child's first 1,000 days. As Mayor, Matt will pursue a public-private partnership to help create ***a one-stop shop of integrated resources*** for Nashvillians who want to be the best parents they can be.

## **III. K-12 Education**

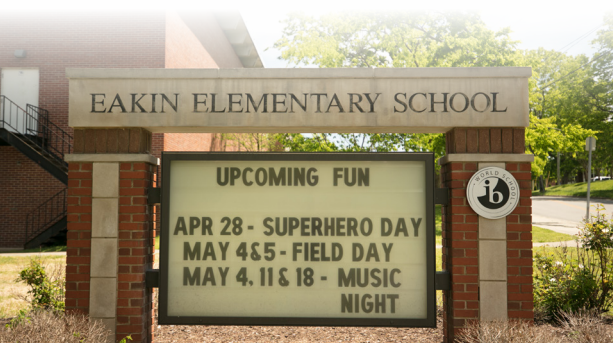
Every parent and guardian in Nashville should be able to choose from a variety of great public schools, beginning with the one in their own neighborhood.

Enrollment in MNPS [is down](#) 14% over the last decade. Declining student enrollment is a nationwide trend that in Nashville has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Reduced enrollment [means](#) less per-pupil funding from the state, which MNPS must address at the same time that it is facing increased challenges, from school safety to teacher shortages.

As Mayor, Matt will partner with families, nonprofits, and the private sector to expand our schools' ability to meet students' evolving needs. He believes deeply that everyone in our community is responsible for our schools' success, and he will build pathways that allow parents and volunteers to take on a more active role. In addition to prioritizing MNPS in budgeting decisions, Matt will work to ensure that all Nashville families have school options that meet their needs, and all children have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

### ***Recruit, retain, and increase support for teachers***

Nationwide, far fewer people are becoming teachers today than they were a decade ago, and Nashville is no exception. Teachers are also leaving the profession at higher rates than before, which only exacerbates the teacher shortage. In Nashville, that means that MNPS regularly averages dozens (and sometimes [hundreds](#)) of vacancies at a time.



## “Every parent and guardian in Nashville should be able to choose from a variety of great schools”

– – Matt Wiltshire, Tennessean, 05/24/23

As Mayor, Matt will **lead a citywide effort to recruit and retain teachers**. He'll start by focusing on affordable housing, which is a [barrier](#) for many who want to teach in MNPS. Matt has a proven track record of creating housing options for Nashvillians, and he will move aggressively to accelerate the pace at which affordable housing units are developed. He will work with developers to create **housing options specifically for teachers** (as well as first responders and other vital public servants), and he will help connect teachers to housing opportunities like the Teacher Next Door program, a federal program that [offers](#) qualifying Nashville teachers grants of up to \$6,472 and down payment assistance of up to \$10,681.

Matt knows that, today in Nashville, we are asking our teachers to solve problems that stretch far beyond their classroom walls, but we are not compensating them in proportion to the magnitude of this near-impossible task. While Nashville's teachers are the [best paid](#) in the state, our cost of living is also the [highest](#). And unfortunately, school funding has fallen as a percentage of Metro's budget, from 42% ten years ago to just 37% this year. As Mayor, Matt will ensure that Metro's budget aligns with our city's priorities, and that **schools are at the top of that list**.

### ***Make our schools safer***

As a father of school aged children, Matt knows the gut-wrenching anxiety that far too many parents feel when they are unsure if their children are safe at school. In the months since the horrific shooting at the Covenant School, he has called on state leaders to do more to keep children safe by passing common-sense laws that will reduce gun violence.

Matt knows there is always more to do at the city level, too. As Mayor, he will partner with MNPS and [Sandy Hook Promise](#), the nonprofit founded and led by families whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, to **bring its [Say Something program to all public schools](#)**.

This first-of-its-kind, no-cost program is based on the fact that, in four out of five school shootings, the attacker told people of their plans ahead of time. It teaches students to recognize the warning signs of someone at risk of hurting themselves or others, and to say something to a trusted adult to get help. It also provides them access to an app, website,



and hotline where they can make [anonymous reports](#). Further, *Say Something* partners with school districts to map law enforcement, mental health, and school officials together so that, **when viable threats are reported, immediate action can be taken.**

**“Nashville should have the best public schools in the country”**

– Matt Wiltshire, Tennessean, 05/24/23

## IV. Higher Education / Workforce

Today, less than half of MNPS graduates [are enrolling](#) in college – the lowest amount in over a decade. While not every good job opportunity requires a college degree, college graduates earn on average [63% more](#) than those with just a high school diploma. Students who choose not to enroll in college immediately after high school need pathways to high-skill, high-demand jobs, but they often struggle to access them.

As Mayor, Matt will set a citywide goal for the percentage of Nashville students who graduate from college or earn a workforce certification, and he will partner with MNPS, higher-education partners, the private sector, and nonprofits to fulfill that vision.

### ***Increase the number of Nashvillians who earn a college degree or a workforce certification***

The equity gap among college-going students in Nashville is the largest it has ever been: Black and Latinx students are far [less likely](#) to enroll in college than are their white and Asian counterparts. And high schools with the lowest college-enrollment rates [serve](#) high populations of both low-income students and students of color.

When it comes to increasing college-completion rates, Matt knows that experts have already identified [what works](#). He will provide the **political will necessary to increase momentum** and the funding needed to sustain the initiatives that lead to successful student outcomes. He will start by working with MNPS and community partners to expand [efforts](#) to ensure that every high-school student is guaranteed regular one-on-one meetings with a college-access professional who can help them navigate toward college completion.



Regardless of whether they are college-bound, students need access to more marketable, high-skill training that prepares them for success in high-demand fields. MNPS's career-based learning [program](#) helps students earn high school credit while working in paid positions at partnering businesses. As Mayor, Matt will work with school leaders to **sustain and scale this [successful initiative](#)**, which grows students' career skills and connects them with workforce certifications. He will also **partner with Nashville's community colleges and technical schools**, along with businesses, to help increase students' access to career pathways in high-demand fields that align with employers' needs.

***Amplify existing programs and deepen community partnerships so more students are able to connect with college opportunities and workforce certifications***

From [Nashville GRAD](#) to the [College Success Collaborative](#) and beyond, Nashville boasts successful programs that can help students pursue higher education and workforce certifications. The problem? Many students and families don't know about them, and if they do, they don't know how to access them. As Mayor, Matt will work with community partners **to help expand these programs and make them more visible and accessible** to the families who will benefit from them.





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