

## Supporting Teachers To Accelerate Student Learning

Located in North Nashville, Purpose Preparatory Academy Charter School serves 352 students in grades K-5. Nearly 95 percent of its students are Black. Purpose Prep aims to provide all students with a rigorous curriculum, high-quality instruction, and positive character development to ensure they are prepared for college.

Since the school's founding in 2013, it has been one of the top-performing elementary schools in Nashville and Tennessee. Based on the 2021-2022 TCAP results, Purpose Prep ranked number one for English language arts (ELA) and math growth among all elementary schools in Metro Nashville

Public Schools. For the third time since 2017, the school has been recognized as a Tennessee Reward School for ranking in the top 5 percent of all schools in the state for both student achievement and growth.

Similar to other schools in Nashville and across the country, Purpose Prep has been impacted by COVID in significant ways. In the spring of 2020, the school pivoted to virtual instruction for the remainder of the school year. Students continued with virtual learning for the duration of the 2020-21 school year before returning for in-person learning in the fall of 2021. Despite the challenges of returning to in-person learning, Purpose Prep students achieved strong academic results by the spring of 2022. Not only did the school's English language arts and math achievement bounce back from the previous spring, but these results also exceeded prepandemic results from 2019.

### Purpose Prep's core values:



#### Purpose

We are unwaveringly focused on achieving our mission - setting every Purpose Prep scholar on the path to college. Every action aligns with and contributes to our shared goals.



#### Respect

We value and appreciate each other, as demonstrated through our words and actions. We treat others the way we want to be treated.



#### Integrity

Our actions are congruent with our beliefs and words. We always follow through on what we say we are going to do.



#### Self-Determination

We do whatever it takes to achieve our goals, exuding steadfast commitment and positivity in the face of challenges. We value the process, no matter how demanding, just as much as the outcome.



#### Excellence

We understand that we are what we repeatedly do - Excellence is not an act, but a habit. We distinguish ourselves by the way we consistently execute on the details.



Leaders at Purpose Prep attribute their success, in part, to a set of high-impact practices focused on accelerating student learning. Among these practices, the school's two-teacher model and teacher coaching and support structures have been particularly important for developing and sustaining the instructional capacity needed to identify and respond to student learning gaps. The school's ability to accelerate student learning has been less about implementing new or innovative practices and more about the consistent execution of practices that have already been shown to help students and teachers succeed.



Over the last decade, Purpose Prep has retained a consistent group of instructional leaders who have continued to refine their implementation of these practices to help students in North Nashville achieve at high levels. For leaders who are interested in implementing similar programs, here are some lessons learned from Purpose Prep.

## Two-Teacher Model



Purpose Prep's two-teacher model, which provides two certified teachers for every core subject area, reflects a strategic decision to ensure the school has the instructional capacity needed to address student learning gaps and accelerate learning. When one teacher is leading the facilitation of an ELA or math lesson, the other teacher is available to monitor student work and address misunderstandings in the moment. Additionally, both teachers facilitate small group reading instruction each day. These groups are adjusted regularly based on assessment data and help ensure students receive daily differentiated support.



The two-teacher model also promotes development and sustainability by pairing a returning teacher with a new or less experienced teacher in each classroom. The veteran teacher can support the less experienced teacher with classroom management, in addition to modeling lessons and providing feedback on the delivery of a lesson. The newer teacher, in turn, can support the veteran teacher by sharing daily grading and planning responsibilities. While one teacher leads the facilitation of the science, social studies, or writing block, the other teacher uses a dedicated planning period to prepare for upcoming lessons, contact parents, and respond to emails. This system for sharing the workload can make the teaching role more manageable, promoting stability and retention over the long term.

The two-teacher model also helps provide consistent and rigorous instruction to students when a teacher is sick or absent. When one teacher is absent, the other teacher in the classroom takes over the lead teaching responsibilities for the entire day.

## Teacher Coaching And Support

Effective teacher coaching and support structures are important components of Purpose Prep's success. Each teacher is assigned a coach from the leadership team who is responsible for their development. Coaches observe their teachers and review student work on a weekly basis, in addition to providing other support as needed. These supports may include providing in-the moment coaching during a lesson, reviewing a video recording of a recent lesson, or modeling part of an upcoming lesson. Biweekly check-in meetings provide a coach and teacher the opportunity to discuss feedback and set priorities for the upcoming week.

Structured practice and feedback are embedded in Purpose Prep's coaching and support structures. During summer professional development, teachers spend considerable time practicing lesson delivery and rehearsing parts of lessons in front of their peers. Once the school year starts, teachers continue this practice during weekly grade-level meetings, monthly after-school professional development, and one-on-one meetings with their coach. Coaches provide feedback and facilitate practice using the [See it. Name it. Do it. Framework](#). This focus on practice and feedback is part of a belief that "iron sharpens iron," which prepares teachers for the high stakes of being in front of students. The school's adoption of high-quality curriculum, which clearly outlines the content teachers should be teaching on a weekly basis, enables coaches to spend time helping teachers prepare how to teach a lesson effectively rather than figuring out what content to teach.

In addition to receiving informal coaching and feedback on a weekly basis, teachers also receive formal feedback through a quarterly evaluation process. This process is guided by the school's [teacher evaluation rubric](#) that codifies the actions a teacher must demonstrate to achieve different levels of effectiveness. As the result of a state waiver, Purpose Prep uses this rubric in place of the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) that was adopted in 2011. The rubric divides teacher actions into three categories: management, rigor, and professionalism.

The actions described within each of these categories are then sequenced into four phases of development. Each of these phases is prioritized during one of the four rounds of the evaluation process. For example, the first two phases, which include classroom management and writing lesson plans, are the focus of the first-quarter evaluations that take place in September. Not only does this system help create an efficient process for evaluating teachers on all aspects of the rubric by the end of the school year, but it also establishes a clear developmental trajectory for teachers and coaches to follow. At any given time of the year, coaches know the areas of development that should be prioritized to ensure teachers are progressing at the right pace.



Regular meeting structures and processes ensure teachers have the necessary time and support to analyze student assessment data and plan how to reteach unmastered content. Content teams participate in weekly data meetings where teachers analyze student work and plan how to reteach unmastered content. Coaches lead teachers through a three-part [interim assessment analysis process](#) after the administration of quarterly interim assessments. This process requires teachers to group the assessed standards by mastery and create a calendar for reteaching; conduct an error analysis of students' assessment responses to identify the most common student misunderstandings; and prepare materials for reteaching unmastered content. Coaches review and provide feedback on the deliverables created from each step of this process.



### Meeting Type



### When



### Purpose

<b>Grade-Level Huddle</b>	Tuesday, Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and discuss upcoming lesson plan(s), practice part of an upcoming lesson</li> <li>Discuss any upcoming grade-level priorities</li> </ul>
<b>Content Team Data Meeting</b>	Tuesday, Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with the team using the curriculum, student work samples, assessments, exemplars, and lesson plans to develop reteach and/or action plans</li> </ul>
<b>1-1 Coaching Meeting</b>	Biweekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss areas of strengths and areas of growth pertaining to classroom management and instructional delivery</li> </ul>
<b>After-School Professional Development</b>	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and discuss student work, data analysis, and intervention plans</li> <li>Curriculum discussions, edits, and revisions</li> <li>Scheduled trainings focused on school-wide or grade-level areas of growth</li> <li>Work time to prepare for the following week, including team meetings, data meetings, and practice</li> </ul>
<b>Interim Assessment Analysis</b>	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze quarterly benchmark assessment data</li> <li>Prepare materials for reteaching unmastered content</li> </ul>

The school's two-teacher model, along with its robust systems for coaching and support, enables new teachers to develop quickly. As a result, Purpose Prep's leaders prioritize alignment with the school's mission and values — rather than teaching experience — in the teacher hiring process. This process, which includes planning and delivering a sample lesson to a group of students, is intended to identify three qualities that are essential to a teacher's future success at Purpose Prep:

a willingness to seek out and accept feedback, a high level of professionalism, and, most importantly, an unwavering belief in the potential of Black students to succeed at high levels.

As leaders at Purpose Preparatory Academy reflect on their successes over the last decade, they offer several pieces of advice to leaders who may want to strengthen the instructional capacity in their schools or districts:

## Advice For Leaders



**Invest in teachers through curriculum and coaching** by implementing high-quality curriculum with fidelity and dedicating the staff capacity needed to provide individualized coaching to all teachers.



**Dedicate time and space for learning** through weekly meeting structures that provide teachers with opportunities to review data, discuss their teaching, and practice.



**Distribute leadership** by building a leadership team focused on instructional coaching; identify opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles.

## Resources

[Curriculum Responsibilities And Meeting Structures](#)

[Interim Assessment Analysis Template](#)

[Teacher Evaluation Rubric](#)

[Weekly Data Meeting Framework](#)

[Reteaching Structures](#)

[See it. Name it. Do it. Framework](#)

