EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AUTHORITY
NOLAN ELEMENTARY-MIDDLE SCHOOL

CREATING A STUDENT-CENTERED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION
TIME THE VARIABLE...LEARNING THE CONSTANT...STUDENTS THE FOCUS

KEY FEATURES:

- ☑ **Turnaround School**
- ☑ **Competency-Based Learning**
- ☑ **Extended Learning Time**
- ☑ **Next Generation Staffing Model**
- ☑ **Flex Blended Model**

AT A GLANCE:

Start Date: Fall 2012

Grades Served: K–8

Location: Detroit, MI

Operator: Education Achievement Authority of Michigan

Operator Type: District

Setting: Urban

Students at Start: 509

Students at Capacity: 600

MODEL TOOLBOX:

Learning Management System: Buzz teaching and learning platform (powered by Brain Honey, supported by School Improvement Network)

Student Information System: PowerSchool

Gradebook: Buzz and PowerSchool

Assessment Tools and Approaches: Global Scholars Performance Series

Digital Content Providers: Mix of open source, licensed, and teacher created — Compass, BrainPop, and DefinedSTEM via netTrekker; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Flocabulary, Imagine Learning, ALEKS Math, ST Math

Hardware: HP Notebooks

> *Our mission as a catalyst for change is to disrupt traditional public schooling and provide a scalable prototype for 21st century teaching and learning.*
>
> **EAA MISSION STATEMENT**

In 2011, just 20 percent of the students at Nolan Elementary-Middle School in Detroit were proficient in communication arts, only 2 percent were proficient in math, and the majority of students were performing two or more years behind grade level. Like many other persistently low-achieving schools in urban centers, Nolan desperately needed a different system for a better outcome.

Enter the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) of Michigan.

Michigan's governor charged the EAA with transforming the lowest 5 percent of the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the state while simultaneously developing a new approach to educating 21st century students. In 2013, at the end of its first year in turnaround, 71 percent of the students at Nolan achieved one or more years of growth in reading and 61 percent in math. Nolan ranked third out of 124 schools in individual student growth according to data released by Excellent Schools Detroit.

Nolan now bears little resemblance to the traditional middle school it was years prior. Instead of being filled with desks, classrooms contain tables, floor pillows, and work stations. Furniture is modular and allows for flexible grouping. In any one classroom, students might work in small focused groups, spend time on their HP Notebooks, partic-ipate in individual conferencing with teachers, and — once introduced to a learning target — cluster to work on projects. Students move throughout the classrooms in a constant buzz of conversation.

But the difference is more than just aesthetic. The design is intended to facilitate EAA's student-centered model, which organizes students by instructional level rather than age and grade level and lets them progress via mastery rather than seat time.

In EAA's student-centered classrooms, students assume responsibility for their learning and participate in planning, goal setting, and producing evidence of what they know and can do based on projects and performance tasks. At Nolan, a climate and culture is being established that fosters student ownership of learning as students become active participants in both thinking and doing in partnership with their teachers. At the center of the design is Brain Honey, a dynamic learning platform that hosts a robust repository of resources, curriculum mapping tools, and assessment tools, as well as a social platform that allows for collaboration and peer-to-peer support.

Learning objects are provided in "bite-sized chunks" and a dashboard provides teachers, parents, and students with prescriptive, real-time analytics. Most importantly, the plat-

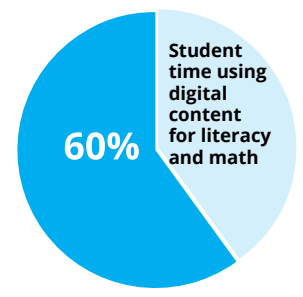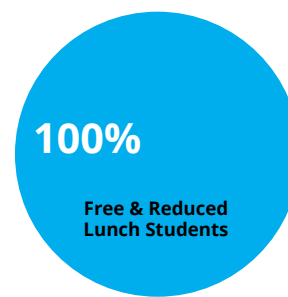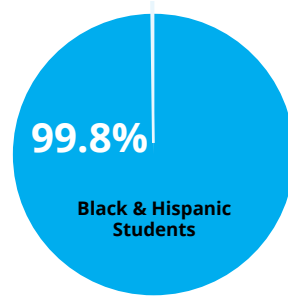*"At Nolan Elementary-Middle School, a climate and culture is being established that fosters student ownership of learning as students become active participants in both thinking and doing in partnership with their teachers."*

form emphasizes not just cognitive skill acquisition but also collaboration and communication — between students and teachers, students and parents, teachers and parents, and students and their peers.

Students spend much of their time working independently and in small groups, conferencing with teachers to monitor progress and for interventions as needed. Rather than pushing students through the system of education, the model gives students a voice every step of the way. Students map their learning paths, make choices and decisions around progression and pacing, conduct self-assessments, and learn to understand the consequences of their decisions.

The daily self-assessments track students' perceptions of their expertise, engagement, and effort. System reports capture students' choice of content, length of use of that content, and preference ratings, which are correlated to student outcomes so that teachers can assess content effectiveness.

At the end of each unit, a final objective assessment serves as a gatekeeper to complement student evidence of mastery through performance tasks.

Teacher roles also shift under this model. After a rigorous hiring process, teachers undergo personalized, on-demand, and job-embedded professional development in both pedagogy and content to prepare for work in a blended environment. Rather than building one-size-fits-all lesson plans, teachers use reports and real-time feedback generated by the learning platform to plan their interactions with students and provide intervention where needed. Real-time analytics help document best practices and assist teachers in providing

99.8%
Black & Hispanic Students

100%
Free & Reduced Lunch Students

60%
Student time using digital content for literacy and math

BLENDED SUBJECTS:
Math, Literacy, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language
(with plans to incorporate Arts, Health and Wellness, and other electives)

BY THE NUMBERS:

Year 1 public revenue per pupil:
$9,217

Year 1 expenses per pupil:
$6,756

Year 4 revenue per pupil:
$10,417
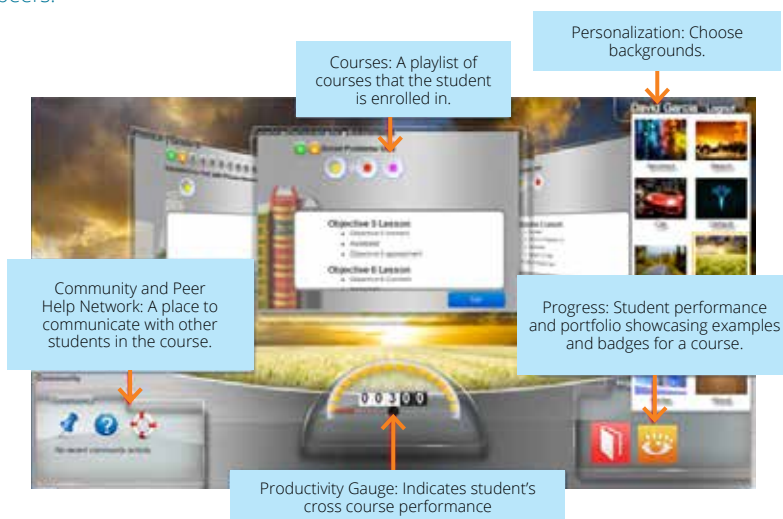
Year 4 expenses per pupil:
$7,956

Years to sustainability: 0

appropriate support to students as well as in building their own capacity.

Turnaround is notoriously difficult. EAA and Nolan's leadership provide a universal system of support to address the challenges of transforming school culture and overcoming ineffective practices and structures. Wrap-around supports are provided in several key areas — developing a climate and culture that shifts from the system to the student, ensuring highly effective teachers, engaging parents and the community, providing social and human service supports to students and families, and providing anytime, anywhere learning opportunities. EAA's goal is that these activities — coupled with an extended 210-day school year — will help magnify the interdependence of the learning community and the links between a student's individual success and the success of the learning community as a whole.

BRAINHONEY PREVIEW

Inside Brain Honey, learning objects are provided in "bite-sized chunks" and a dashboard provides students with prescriptive, real-time analytics. Students can choose coursework from a playlist, customize their view, and reach out to collaborate and communicate with peers.

Courses: A playlist of courses that the student is enrolled in.

Personalization: Choose backgrounds.

Community and Peer Help Network: A place to communicate with other students in the course.

Progress: Student performance and portfolio showcasing examples and badges for a course.

Productivity Gauge: Indicates student's cross course performance

NEXT GENERATION
LEARNING CHALLENGES
nextgenlearning.org