



Green Dot Public schools

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Principal: Jonas Cleaves

**COLLEGE. LEADERSHIP. LIFE.**

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## School Information

Name of school: Bluff City High School

Type of charter: Start Up

Year school opened: 2017

Age of school: 1 year

School hours: 8:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (breakfast offered at 7:35 a.m.)

Grade level(s) served: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, growing to 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> by August 2020

Current enrollment: 300

Maximum enrollment: 616 students

Number of instructional days per school year: 184 days

Name of Board President: Larry Neal

Board President Email Address: [Larry.Neal@greendot.org](mailto:Larry.Neal@greendot.org)

Board President Phone Number: (901) 730-8160

Name of School Leader: Jonas Cleaves, Principal

School Leader email address: [Jonas.Cleaves@greendot.org](mailto:Jonas.Cleaves@greendot.org)

School Leader phone number: (901) 730-8157

Mission Statement: Green Dot Public Schools Tennessee's mission is to transform public education so all students graduate prepared for college, leadership and life.

## **Section I – Progress toward the charter school’s goals (must include academic achievement)**

Green Dot Public Schools Tennessee (“GDPST”, “Green Dot TN”, or “Green Dot”) is a small local public school district working to improve public education in Memphis for students in high poverty communities, and to ensure that all students graduate high school with the skills necessary to succeed in college, leadership, and life.

Green Dot TN’s fifth school—Bluff City High School (“Bluff City”)—opened in fall 2017 as a new, start-up charter high school authorized by the Tennessee State Commission for Education. This school opened to further one of Green Dot’s core strategies: to give all parents the option of sending their children to a high-quality local school. Green Dot strategically opened Bluff City near our two middle schools to ensure that the significant academic progress students are achieving in middle school can continue through high school. Providing a consistent, seven-year pathway to success is vital for students already several grade levels behind when they enter the sixth grade. In the 2017-18 school year, Bluff City served an inaugural class of 155 students, 100% of whom were designated as “low-income”, 23% requiring special education services, and 14% classified as English Language Learners. The school will grow a grade level a year until it achieves full enrollment in 2020.

Bluff City’s academic model prioritizes strong and empowered leadership, highly-effective teaching, a college-preparatory curriculum, meaningful community engagement, and the provision of comprehensive wraparound services to reduce non-academic barriers to learning. The strength of this proven model, adapted to meet the unique needs of students, families, and communities in Memphis, and has allowed Green Dot to exemplify the power of a public school to transform student behavior and academic outcomes.

We are focused on building a high quality school that graduates all students with the academic and practical skills essential for success, and measures progress towards this goal with the following annually measured objectives:

### **Student Achievement and Growth Goals**

Green Dot believes growth is the best indicator of the progress of our students, given incoming student performance levels. Although we constantly strive to achieve college-readiness for all of our students, GDPST’s results must be viewed in the context of our early signs of rapid academic growth.

#### *Student Achievement on State Assessments*

Bluff City High School uses the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) s and TN Ready to measure our student’s progress towards proficiency. Bluff City’s baseline proficiency levels were established in the 2017-2018 school year. Our goal is to see a 10% point growth in proficient/advanced in both Mathematics and English each year from the 2017-2018 baseline, and to see a 5% increase each year on students scoring proficient/advanced school-wide for each subgroup (or an aggregate of 25 percentage points over 5 years) until proficient/advanced % is achieved.

### Lexile Growth

Bluff City set a goal that at least 50% of students will grow their English ability by 1.5 years or greater in one academic year as measured by their Lexile score, and we are pleased to report that we met this goal. Based on our iReady internal assessment data, approximately 65% of students met this goal in Reading.

**iReady 2017-2018 Data**

	Tier I <sup>1</sup>		Change	Tier II		Change	Tier III		Change
	Fall	Spring	(+/-)	Fall	Spring	(+/-)	Fall	Spring	(+/-)
<b>SWDs</b>	0.0%	3.8%	3.8%	4.5%	7.7%	3.2%	95.5%	88.5%	-7.0%
<b>Gen Ed</b>	2.8%	16.4	13.6%	13.8%	28.3%	14.5%	83.5%	52.5%	-31.0%
<b>EL</b>	0.0%	9.5%	9.5%	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%	76.2%	-23.8%
<b>Overall</b>	2.3%	14.1%	14.1%	12.2%	24.7%	12.4%	85.5%	58.9%	-26.6%

### ACT and College Readiness

As a new school, we do not yet have baseline data for our ACT goal, but once we have that data, our target growth is 0.5 points per year from baseline.

### Student and Family Engagement Goals

#### School Attendance Rates

Our target attendance rate at Bluff City is 90%. For the 2017-2018 school year, the average daily attendance rate was 91.8%.

#### Pupil Suspension

Bluff City set a goal to reduce suspension rates by 25% each year, with end goal of schoolwide suspension rates below 5%. The 2017-2018 served as the baseline year, with a 22% suspension rate.

17-18 SY Baseline	18-19 SY	19-20 SY	20-21 SY	21-22 SY	22-23 SY	23-24 SY
22.4%	16.8%	12.6%	9.45%	7.08%	5.31%	3.9%

<sup>1</sup> Students in Tier 1 are performing on or above grade level. Students in RTI Tier 2 are one level below grade level. Students in Tier 3 are more than one level below grade level.

## Section II – Student mobility

The cumulative enrollment at Bluff City for the 17-18 school year was 185 students, with average enrollment of 157 students.

Below is the student exit information for the 2017-2018 school year.

Transferred, Unknown	2
Transferred to another school in state	18
Transferred out-of-state	4

## Section III – Operations and Finance<sup>2</sup>

### *Audit Findings*

In Bluff City's annual audit, there were no findings to report.

### *Challenges*

Cost and construction of facilities have been an ongoing challenge for Bluff City. To mitigate the challenge, the school now has a facilities financing partner and design plans for a multiple phase project able to support over 600 students and robust extracurricular activities.

### *Charter Authorizer Concerns*

The Tennessee State Board of Education Subrecipient Monitoring Results listed two financial and operational recommendations, both of which Bluff City has already re-established:

- Managing federal grant funds- Federal grant management protocols have been aligned with State Board of Education recommendations and Federal requirements.
- Length of Time Required for Record Retention- Record retention protocols have been aligned with State Board of Education recommendations, and State and Federal requirements.

### *Planned Expansion*

In 2017, Bluff City opened with a fully enrolled founding 9<sup>th</sup> grade class and well on track for financial sustainability. Because of the proximity of Bluff City to Green Dot's two middle schools we anticipate that Bluff City will continue to draw from the over 300 students who graduate from Wooddale or Kirby's 8<sup>th</sup> grade class each year.

Bluff City will expand via grade by grade phase in to ensure formation of a supportive school culture that sets high expectations for students. Building a school slowly in this way allows the school to operate with less overhead, allowing the school to attain sustainability far quicker than a transformation school. As seen in Table 1: Bluff City High School Profit and Loss Statement (Projections for FY19F – FY23F) included in the appendix below.

### *Operational Policies*

Green Dot has refined its operational practices to better serve students, families, and communities at a lower cost. In recent years, Green Dot underwent a widespread shift to more effectively use software-

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<sup>2</sup> Table 1 shows the Bluff City High School Unaudited statement of activities and changes in net assets. Table 2 shows the Bluff City High School Profit and Loss Statement (Projections for FY19F – FY23F)

based systems to integrate organizational practices like student registration, payroll, teacher recruitment, and employee benefits to dramatically decrease the amount of time spent on transactional work. Green Dot's Memphis team has thoughtfully reevaluated its staffing model and vendor options to decrease overhead costs despite rapid growth. For example, when Bluff City opened this year adding 160 students and 14 staff members to Green Dot's community, the organization is on track to spend *less* on operational expenses this year. This ensures Green Dot remains financially sustainable while keeping as much money in Green Dot's classrooms as possible (84% of overall revenue stays directly at the schools).

Green Dot has strong financial and operational projections for the next five years based on current enrollment trends, concrete expansion plans that will generate revenue while serving Memphis's neediest communities, and Green Dot's lean, student-focused operational model.

### *Revenue*

A summary of Bluff City's revenue streams is included in Table 2. Bluff City High School Unaudited statement of activities and changes in net assets in the appendix below.

## **Section IV – Leadership changes**

Board Chair Jim Boyd left Green Dot Tennessee's Board during the 2017-18 school year. Larry Neal, assumed the position of Board Chair prior to Mr. Boyd's departure.

## **Section V - Parent and Community Involvement**

### **Parent Engagement**

As a new school, it is extremely important that we have the support of our parents. We set an ambitious goal of having 90% of Bluff City families recommending Green Dot to a friend. For the 2017-18 school year, we garnered a 93% recommendation<sup>3</sup> from our parent base and we look forward to the continued partnership.

Bluff City provides a range of free adult education workshops on issues that parents have identified as important to them. Courses will center around career guidance, financial literacy, and health and wellness. Once a year, Green Dot will hold a two-day job-preparedness training. On day one, participants can attend workshops on how to formulate and update their resumes and how to prepare for a job interview. Parents will also learn best practices for professionally handling the interview process. On day two, Bluff City will host a job fair that brings together a number of Memphis's largest employers for interview and informational sessions. Bluff City will also offer a comprehensive annual financial literacy course to help parents effectively manage their finances and learn money-saving strategies. Parents will be taught to complete their own income tax returns and use online sites that offer free tax prep, instead of paying costly filing fees to an outside agency. Parents will also learn how to open free checking and savings accounts so that they can start saving for their child's college expenses.

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendations were measured by an annual survey administered to all parents. Specific questions measuring the recommendation include "Teachers at this school have helped me to help my student get ready for their next step in their education" and "Teachers at my school have helped my student set high academic goals."

To build Green Dot's schools as community hubs -- centers where parents and students can organize around issues important to them -- Green Dot is in the initial stages of building a culture of civic organizing. In the upcoming year, the Community Engagement Team works closely with around 20 parents from across the Green Dot network, meeting with them monthly to train them as advocates of Green Dot's work to transform public education in Memphis. These parents canvass the geographic enrollment boundaries of Green Dot's schools to explain Green Dot's academic model and services to local families.

Finally, Bluff City provides access to health and wellness services to students and their families. Green Dot's official healthcare partners in Memphis - Well Child, LeBonheur Hospital and Youth Villages - provide extensive services at Bluff City, including nursing services and an annual health fair. For the health fair, representatives will spend the day on campus providing students and parents with immunizations, mental health services, physical fitness classes, blood pressure monitoring, cholesterol checks, and diabetes education classes. Throughout the year, Bluff City offers free dental services on campus provided by Bellevue Baptist Church's mobile dental clinic.

### **Partner Organizations**

Education is a powerful lever for student success in college, leadership and life, yet the communities served by our schools have a pivotal role to play in providing safe neighborhoods where talent and aspiration can blossom. Green Dot collaborates with a wide range of community partners to deeply invest the organization within our local communities and to ensure that our students and families have access to essential services.

#### **(1) Socio-Emotional Support**

Green Dot partners with non-profit organizations that directly respond to pertinent student needs. For example, Green Dot partners with *Youth Villages* to offer mental health services at no cost to students or their families; the only public school operator in Memphis to do so. Youth Villages counselors run weekly groups at each of our schools and provide students with intensive outpatient support. Given the depth of our students' socioemotional and mental health needs, Green Dot believes this collaboration is essential to students' long-term success.

Green Dot partners with *Communities in Schools* to support chronically absent middle school students and provide direct relief to homeless students, students who are grieving the loss of a family member or friend, those who must stay home from school to take care of a sibling, or those who are experiencing other critical life events. They do this by connecting students and their families with otherwise unknown or inaccessible community resources that range from clothing drives to medical clinics.

#### **(2) Student Leadership**

Green Dot partners with various charitable organizations that help students develop leadership skills. The *Campaign for School Equity* runs a weekly leadership course for students to learn and practice effective advocacy for school- and community-wide issues, meeting with Memphis leaders, local civic groups, touring the state legislature, and building their own campaign platform. *Leadership Memphis* pairs students with mentors, targeting participation to students who fall through the cracks to empower them to strengthen their voice and develop actionable

professional goals. *ALSAC/St. Jude* also pairs students with professional mentors, who focus their support on guiding students on a path to college.

### **(3) Academic Enrichment**

Some local non-profit partners bring enrichment programs to Green Dot students and parents. *Code Crew* runs a robotics/coding course after school, *Ballet on Wheels* brings art and dance to Green Dot's afterschool programs, and *Uplift Motion!* holds free yoga courses for students. For its second year of operation, Bluff City earned a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Grant that will support the expansion of after school programming

As part of Green Dot's parent education programming, Green Dot partners with *Milestones* to offer resume-writing workshops, and *UCAN of Memphis* to help parents role-play job interviews.

### **(4) Community Development**

Green Dot partners with charitable organizations that have a broader focus—helping Green Dot become a communal hub that provides families with regular opportunities to meet, share ideas, and collaborate on actions that create tangible positive change in their communities. The *Memphis Education Fund* connects Green Dot schools to funding opportunities for student-focused advocacy programs. The *Shalom Zone* is focused on rebuilding Memphis neighborhoods' sense of community pride and works specifically with Kirby Middle and Wooddale Middle to create a thriving community in Hickory Hill.

### **(5) Public School Operators**

Finally, Green Dot conducts deep, long-term collaboration with other local charter school operators through *Instruction Partners*. The group convenes a cohort of local operators to work collaboratively: observing best practices within each CMO's schools, sharing their experiences, and supporting each other in their implementation efforts. Instruction Partners works with each CMO to test and codify best practices, sharing these practices with the entire cohort through eight annual convenings and monthly emails.

## **Section VI – Promising Practices**

### **Teacher Support and Improvement**

Green Dot seeks to ensure every student is taught by a highly effective teacher. As such, Bluff City hires mission-aligned employees and provides a robust network of professional supports to ensure every teacher is continually growing his or her practice. For teachers, part of these supports includes a centralized team of 7 Curriculum Specialists who provide 1-on-1 coaching and weekly, subject-specific professional development. Similarly, principals receive weekly coaching from the Director of Schools. Green Dot seeks to curate a supportive culture and offers employees varying paths of professional growth, including opportunities for leadership that allow teachers to remain in the classroom.

### **Support for English Learners and Students with Disabilities**

At Bluff City, we serve Students with Disabilities via inclusion classrooms (where the special education teacher was supporting students with the general education teacher in core content areas and the educational assistant was supporting students with the general education teacher in the related arts) and self-contained classrooms (where students receive individualized instruction). We are continuously



reflective about how to improve operationally to serve these students, specifically by adjusting practices and timelines within the IEP transfer process and the IEP development process.

As a result, we have been able to grow our SWDs and ELs from 0% performing on grade level at the start of the 2017 school year, to nearly 4% and 8% respectively. Also, we have seen tremendous results in the movement from Tier III (performing multiple levels below grade level) for our English Learners, reducing the number of students in performing multiple grade level below by a quarter.

*iReady 2017-2018 Data*

	Tier I <sup>4</sup>			Tier II			Tier III		
	Fall	Spring	Change (+/-)	Fall	Spring	Change (+/-)	Fall	Spring	Change (+/-)
<b>SWDs</b>	0.0%	3.8%	3.8%	4.5%	7.7%	3.1%	95.5%	88.5%	-7.0%
<b>EL</b>	0.0%	9.5%	9.5%	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%	76.2%	-23.8%
<b>Overall</b>	2.3%	14.1%	14.1%	12.2%	24.7%	12.4%	85.5%	58.9%	-26.6%

**Building School Culture**

One of our biggest priorities at Bluff City is our commitment to ensuring strong school culture and family engagement, which can be felt among students and staff alike. While we are still making progress, we have demonstrated evidence that discipline incidents are decreasing. During its first year of operation, suspension rates decreased each quarter. Additionally, the school did not have In-School Suspensions, and zero students were expelled from school.

An area with continued reflection, Bluff City has begun a school-wide effort to address discipline incidents through community service in lieu of excessive out of school suspensions and stated that developing the implementation of mediation and restorative justice strategies is a priority. We are in the progress of beginning our Safe and Civil Leadership Team, which will provide input into school policies around Code of Conduct and culture, and will monitor discipline data via the Safe and Civil Dashboard.

**Engaged Parents and Communities**

Green Dot recognizes the importance of community investment in a student’s education by fostering strong school cultures. Green Dot’s Parent and Community Engagement Coordinators offer free adult education workshops designed to develop basic skills and provide parents with a core understanding of the issues that most affect their children and communities. Coordinators also organize community wellness activities including job fairs, resume writing workshops, and various health services. In order to keep parents engaged, Bluff City strives to keep the lines of communication open with parents with multiple touchpoints including text messages, calls, progress reports, and reports cards. The school is trying different strategies to get parents involved at the school in a positive way.

**Developing College-Ready Learners**

Green Dot has adapted a proven academic model to meet the unique needs of students in Memphis. New Tennessee standards introduced in 2015 have radically altered how math and English need to be taught, from requiring passive memorization to a broader conceptual understanding of underlying principles and self-directed problem-solving. Green Dot’s Education Team has thoughtfully selected and

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<sup>4</sup> Students in Tier 1 are performing on or above grade level. Students in RTI Tier 2 are one level below grade level. Students in Tier 3 are more than one level below grade level.

modified curricula to meet these standards and ease the burden of teacher implementation. Green Dot also provides Math & English intervention classes that combine personalized small group learning with online-based adaptive lessons so that every student can target their learning to the specific areas where they need the most support.

In addition to a strong academic program, developing students into college-ready learners, when they lack key sets of non-cognitive skills as they begin middle or high school, requires intensive tiered behavioral and socioemotional supports. Green Dot addresses students' varied non-academic barriers to learning by providing counseling, culturally sensitive discipline policies, and other responsive programming to meet each student's needs.

### **Conclusion: Action Steps**

Bluff City enjoyed a strong first year of operation. A continued focus on the following four areas will ensure that our school can achieve its mission to prepare all students for success in college, leadership and life.

- **FOCUS 1: Growing the number of students performing in Tier 1 (at or above grade level) and reducing the number of students performing in Tier 3 (more than 2 years below grade level).** The school will continue to refine its intervention program during the school day (literacy intervention, math intervention and advisory) as well as grow the number of after school offerings to support student learning.
- **FOCUS 2: Improve attendance by focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism rates and improving overall attendance rates.** The school understands that students need to be in school every day to learn the skills necessary for success in college. The school will provide positive incentives to encourage students to attend daily and arrive on time to school. Additionally, the school will close monitor individual student attendance and provide support where needed to reduce chronic absenteeism.
- **FOCUS 3: Increase enrollment at the school.** While the school has a pool of Green Dot middle school students from which to recruit, it will be important to continue to build our name in the community so we can maintain healthy enrollments.
- **FOCUS 4: Increase college readiness and improve college readiness.** Bluff City offers a four-year advisory program focused on college and career readiness. As the school grows a grade level it is important to continue support students in the 'college knowledge' process. It is also critical that students participate in ACT preparatory coursework so they are prepared for the test junior year.

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Appendix

Table 1: Bluff City High School Profit and Loss Statement (Projections for FY19F – FY23F)

ACCT Account	FY19F	FY20F	FY21F	FY22F	FY23F
<b>ADM</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>					
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>3,077,386</b>	<b>4,704,577</b>	<b>6,393,090</b>	<b>6,515,778</b>	<b>6,640,880</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
<b>Total Personnel Costs</b>	<b>2,017,921</b>	<b>2,752,361</b>	<b>3,530,992</b>	<b>3,611,080</b>	<b>3,693,390</b>
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>1,481,251</b>	<b>2,224,030</b>	<b>2,762,999</b>	<b>2,801,761</b>	<b>2,841,293</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(421,787)</b>	<b>(271,814)</b>	<b>99,099</b>	<b>102,937</b>	<b>106,197</b>

Table 2: Bluff City High School Unaudited statement of activities and changes in net assets

	Year-to-Date	
	Actual	Budget
<b>REVENUE</b>		
State Apportionment	\$1,368,636	\$1,435,000
Other Per-Pupil Driven	0	0
Special Education	0	0
Federal	90,535	116,087
Other State	1,564	0
Grants <sup>5</sup>	867,362	535,468
Facility Reimbursement	0	0
Other	4	0
Shared service revenue	0	0
Food Nutrition	0	0
Local	19,894	44,865
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,347,995</b>	<b>\$2,131,421</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		

<sup>5</sup> Of this \$1.68M, \$307k is R&E and \$1.3M is Charter School Growth Fund grant

Certificated Salaries	<b>723,837</b>	748,490
Certificated Overtime, Bonuses, and Stipends	<b>13,625</b>	7,700
Substitute Services	<b>40,165</b>	12,480
Classified Salaries	<b>161,021</b>	153,051
Classified Overtime, Bonuses, and Stipends	<b>12,594</b>	9,838
Summer School & Summer Bridge	<b>0</b>	4,125
Certificated and Classified Benefits	<b>225,118</b>	279,868
<b>Total Personnel Costs</b>	<b>\$1,176,359</b>	<b>\$1,215,551</b>
Classroom and Academic Supplies	<b>17,515</b>	27,625
Office Supplies	<b>88,489</b>	47,943
Employee Related	<b>12,338</b>	6,155
Student Related	<b>112,101</b>	57,273
IT & Other Noncap Equipment	<b>165,417</b>	167,694
Facilities	<b>316,881</b>	342,862
Services	<b>118,205</b>	119,721
Non-Discretionary	<b>129,136</b>	165,158
Shared service fees	<b>211,580</b>	224,908
<b>Total Operating Costs</b>	<b>\$1,171,662</b>	<b>\$1,159,340</b>

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