

MS – ILN Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN)?

The Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN) is a partnership between A and B school districts and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to provide a space for sharing innovative strategies and learning about ways to transform our education system. The MDE participates in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Innovation Lab Network and is committed to working with districts within Mississippi to advance new models of learning that can best prepare all students for success in the 21st century.

What does “innovation” mean in the MS-ILN?

For the MS-ILN “innovation” is used as “a new or creative alternative to existing instructional and administrative practices intended to improve student learning and student performance of all students.” To be more specific, “Learning Innovation” is about moving from the teaching system of the 20th century to a new “learning system” of the 21st century where learning and the “facilitation of learning” (teaching) are the central elements.

Learning Innovation is not about modifying the existing teaching system; it is about creating a new system that includes the following:

- involving students and teachers in significantly different ways that lead to increased student learning and engagement
- defining new outcomes for learning and designing new ways of measuring students’ progress and mastery
- creating new ways of facilitating learning and designing different structures for deploying adults in schools
- moving from a “one-size-fits-all” instructional program to personalized learning
- focusing on the 21st-century skills of collaboration, teamwork, problem formulation, creativity and the ability to “learn how to learn”
- creating systems where students are partners in designing and owning their learning
- ensuring that a student can learn anywhere he/she can access the instructional material and at any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year
- creating a system of support for each student to be successful in this environment

What are the MS-ILN goals?

Our goals for MS-ILN are:

1. Building and supporting a network of district and school leaders dedicated to using innovation to improve the education outcomes for students in MS
2. Sharing best-practices from innovative districts in Mississippi
3. Extending innovative opportunities to isolated rural districts
4. Creating and supporting a Middle School Task Force to increase the focus on academic, social/emotional, and cultural issues leading to student engagement/success
5. Identifying goals and supports for middle schools in MS

What are the six (6) critical attributes of educational innovation identified by the CCSSO ILN?

1. Fostering world-class knowledge and skills
2. Student agency
3. Personalized learning
4. Performance-based assessment
5. Anytime/anywhere opportunities
6. Providing comprehensive systems of learner support

In which CCSSO peer learning communities is MS-ILN participating?

MS-ILN will participate fully in PLC#1 Whole Child approaches to personalized learning and PLC#4 State Agency. Our focus will be on equity and leadership during the first year. We plan to build relationships and peer learning communities in the first year (through June 2019), and then ensure that more attention is focused on rigor and quality of implementation. Our concern is that underserved students across the state have not been exposed equitably to innovative programs or personalized learning strategies.

How can membership in the MS-ILN support reaching those goals?

Participation will support and sustain the activities needed to expand innovative programs across Mississippi, especially reaching rural, isolated districts. MS-ILN also needs support from member districts in networking with education leaders from other states, in serving as thought partners as we create our own state-wide network, and in keeping us focused on the cross-cutting themes of equity and leadership as we embark upon our work.

What are the benefits for member districts?

1. The MDE will be committed to the full implementation of the MS-ILN and will facilitate and schedule at least four (4) whole network meetings per year.
2. The MDE will work with the member's staff and other parties to develop a model for facilitating the collaboration of best practices across the state.
3. The MDE will provide technical assistance to the Members in the following areas: identifying mentor/coach districts, developing protocol for collaboration, engaging network members, facilitating communication between Members, and implementing Member supports.
4. The MDE will provide appropriate and relevant professional development for the Members and will share best practices from other Members across the state.
5. The MDE will work with relevant offices to develop policies and practices that are supportive of MS-ILN schools.
6. The MDE will maintain a database of innovative practices and outcomes associated with the MS-ILN. The MDE will report on the progress and outcomes of the MS-ILN on a regular basis.

What are the responsibilities associated with membership in the MS-ILN?

1. Member will be committed to the full implementation of MS-ILN, including participating in quarterly meetings of the MS-ILN, as well as participating in monthly calls for PLCs as needed. Examples may include but are not limited to: joining a personalized learning study group; contributing to educational research efforts; giving feedback on best practices; or other projects that may arise.
2. Member will share information with other Members to help inform participating network programs.
3. Member will ensure that other participating members within the district receive mentoring/coaching from an education professional, including an opportunity to communicate in writing or online and face-to-face interaction on at least four (4) occasions per year.
4. Member will work with the MS-ILN to collect data concerning innovative practices for submission to the MDE database, including submitting an annual highlight relating 2-3 district specific policies and/or practices as well as project outcomes. The focus of these reports should emphasize approaches that move toward vastly improved levels of student learning and success through redesigned systems.

There will be no waivers for any regulation that relates to: health and safety; civil rights; federal law; and regulations related to state assessment and accountability.