



MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COUNCIL (CEC) GUIDANCE



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Community Engagement Councils (CECs), formerly referred to as P-16 Community Engagement Councils or P-16 Councils, are required under Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5. The purpose of CECs is to implement broad-spectrum community-based support for schools and districts implementing improvement plans to improve outcomes for learners.

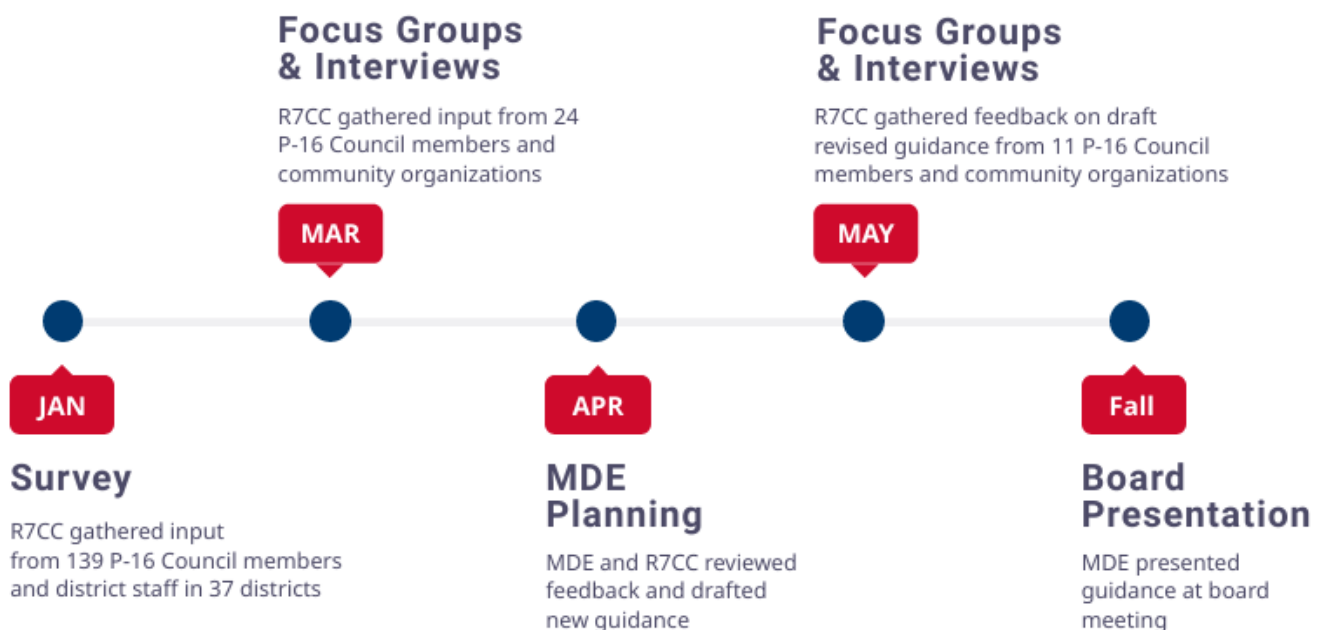
While the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) released pilot guidance for implementation in 2011, MDE determined that a need existed to revisit the original guidance to include stronger clarification for meeting MDE’s expectations for implementation.

In early 2022, MDE and the Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC) began the guidance revision process. This process included a survey and an initial set of four focus groups. Participants included representation from the following stakeholders:

- School administration, faculty, and staff
- School district Board of Trustees and district administration, faculty, and staff
- Community members
- Community leaders, public officials, and business community members
- Students
- Parents
- Community-based organizations

Based on the information gathered, R7CC and MDE drafted initial guidance. In May, R7CC hosted additional focus groups to get feedback on the draft guidance. After making final revisions, MDE presented the guidance for information purposes to its State Board of Education (SBE). See [Appendix A](#) for more detailed information about the development process.

This guidance outlines the requirements and best practices for CEC implementation. This 2022 guidance replaces all previous versions. See [Appendix B](#) for a summary of changes from the previous version.



OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COUNCIL (CEC)?

A CEC is a community-led group focused on improving a school or district. The CEC works with the school or district to support school improvement. The group is “inclusive, accountable, and required to share progress publicly” (See [Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5](#)). Each CEC includes parents, educators, students, and community members. CECs may be formed at a district or school level. See the section titled [Who shall establish a CEC?](#) for additional details.



CECs are self-governed. CEC members are responsible for running meetings. However, the CEC and school/district must work together to be successful. This document includes ideas for how the CEC and school/district should work together.

Each year, the CEC sets a goal. The CEC should set the goal based on a review of the following data, which districts or schools shall provide to councils:

DISTRICT-LEVEL CEC	SCHOOL-LEVEL CEC
District strategic plan	School improvement plan, if applicable
District report card	School report card
District climate data (i.e., discipline, attendance, staff turnover rate, etc.)	School climate data (i.e., discipline, attendance, staff turnover rate, etc.)

The lists above are specific to district-level and school-level CECs. However, it may also be helpful for a school-level CEC to review district-level data. For example, it might be helpful for a school-level CEC to understand how well the district’s strategic plan aligns with the school’s improvement plan. Similarly, it might be helpful for a district-level CEC to review school-level data. For example, it may be helpful to look at district climate data overall but then also look at differences across schools to see if some schools have stronger climates than others.

The CEC should obtain input on the goal from the district or school to avoid duplication of efforts. The goal may be based on a pre-existing goal or may address a gap in current plans.

A CEC is not the same as the school board. **CECs do not have the authority to set policy.** However, CECs may recommend policies or policy changes. CEC leadership should share policy recommendations with school/district leadership and/or the school board.

WHY ARE CECs IMPORTANT?

It takes an engaged community to support the improvement of a school or district. Communities possess important knowledge, understanding, and expertise that can support schools. A CEC is an inclusive group that empowers multiple voices and perspectives. The group represents the local community to support school improvement efforts, offer feedback, and help provide additional resources.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUCCESS OF CECs?

CEC members, districts, schools, and the MDE play important roles. They all help ensure the success of the CEC. The table below articulates roles once the council is established.

CEC members will...	School and district leaders will...	Mississippi Department of Education will...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convene a minimum of six times per year in open meetings• Run CEC meetings• Hold open meetings so other community members can attend• Select and work towards a goal aligned with school/district improvement efforts• Work closely with the school/district and community• Publicly report progress to the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish and ensure continued implementation of a CEC, ideally with the support of CEC members• Work closely with the CEC to ensure its success• Meet MDE reporting requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide guidance related to CECs• Provide on-site and virtual trainings• Be available for additional support on an as-needed basis• Hold schools and districts accountable for CEC requirements

WHO SHALL ESTABLISH A CEC?

Each year, MDE assigns schools and districts performance classifications (i.e., grades) of A through F. MDE assigns these grades based on student achievement, growth, participation in testing, and other academic measures as identified in the Accountability Model.

1. Any district with a grade of D or F shall establish a CEC.
2. Any school rated D or F shall establish a CEC.
(*Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards* 12, 12.1, 12.2)

Districts with several schools rated D or F may choose to have one district CEC instead of multiple school CECs. This decision is at the discretion of the district but may be made with community input. Creating one district CEC can help increase engagement. It may also reduce the time burden



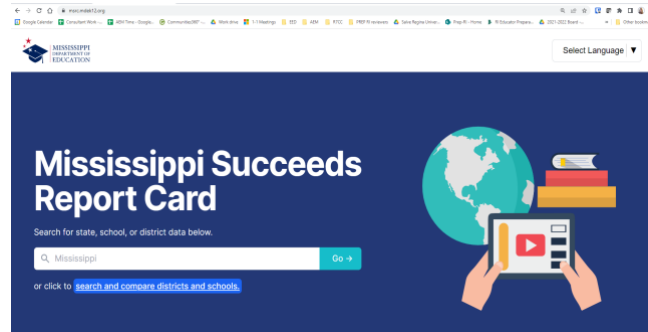
of establishing and participating in multiple school CECs. The district CEC should include representation from all schools with a rating of D or F.

KEY RESOURCE

Mississippi Succeeds Report Card

Community members can access school and district grades via the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card. On the site, you can:

- Access the page in your language of choice
- Search for a specific school or district
- Access school and district grades
- Explore data



WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING A CEC?

MDE releases the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card in the fall of each year. Districts or schools that are required to establish a CEC should follow Steps 1–4 of the process provided on page 8 during the fall. Typically, this process should occur between September and December. During the first year of implementation, the CEC should be established and ready to meet by January of the school year the district or school received notification of the requirement.

Once CECs have been established, the council can work to build membership, which may include replacing members using Steps 1–4. However, these processes should occur during the spring and summer. Because the CEC is required to meet regularly, this means meetings should take place, at a minimum, from October through May.



STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING A CEC

Step 1: Communicate information about CECs	Step 2: Hold an information session about CECs	Step 3: Gather interest forms or nominations	Step 4: Host elections to select CEC members
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe what a CEC is.• Share opportunities to get involved in CECs.• Schedule and publicize upcoming information session.• Use a variety of communication methods throughout the community.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasize the importance of CECs in the community.• Offer multiple sessions at a variety of times to accommodate varying work schedules.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect forms/nominations.• Provide option of submitting forms electronically, by mail, or in person.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide adequate notice (at least two weeks) of the election prior to the event using a variety of communication methods.• Community votes to select members (not teachers and school/district staff).• CEC members will select officers.

The process for selecting CECs must prioritize community members. District personnel (school board members, district administration, school faculty and staff, including food service, transportation, and maintenance staff) may serve as members of the council. However, teachers and administrators may not participate in the voting process to select CEC membership, even if they live in the local community.

The CEC must establish processes in their operating principles to fill elected member roles. For example, in some cases, an elected CEC member may need to stop serving mid-term. The CEC may vote to keep the position vacant until the next school year with a two-thirds vote. The CEC can also seek to fill the position. To do so, the CEC must work with the school or district to follow Steps 1–4 above.

WHAT ARE CEC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

Districts are accountable for setting up CECs and ensuring that they meet regularly. The table on page 9 includes the deadlines for providing MDE required information and supporting evidence. Districts should submit all required evidence through the Mississippi Comprehensive Automated Performance-based System (MCAPS). MDE reviews all the required information as part of its regular monitoring efforts. Districts should use the checklist in [Appendix D](#) to track their adherence to reporting requirements.

DEADLINE	REQUIRED INFORMATION	DETAILS AND EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
December	Date(s) communications shared about opportunities to serve on the CEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies of flyers Screenshots of social media postings Minutes from meetings with information about CEC highlighted
December	Date(s) of CEC information sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign-in sheets Meeting agendas
December	Date range during which interest forms/nomination forms were solicited and collected	Copies of interest forms/nomination forms submitted by interested community members
December	Membership list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First and last names of all CEC members and leadership roles, if applicable Email addresses for all CEC members
December	Meeting calendar	Meeting calendar
May	Meeting details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting attendance sheets Agenda and minutes from each meeting
May	Date(s) of public reports from the CEC to the community	<p><i>Each council may determine the best format for the public report. Acceptable evidence includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written reports or updates Recordings of presentations Video updates

Each CEC shall publicly report progress to the community (See [Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5](#)). Each CEC decides how to best report progress in their community. For reference, MDE includes a template in [Appendix E](#).

WHAT HAPPENS IF A CEC OR A SCHOOL/DISTRICT DOES NOT FOLLOW THIS GUIDANCE?

CECs are intended to benefit school communities. They are meant to support school improvement efforts.

The CEC and the school/district shall work together to ensure success. If one or more parties work in ways that undermine success, then corrective action is needed.

The CEC and/or school/district shall first work to resolve issues on their own. If issues cannot be resolved, any member of the CEC, school, or district may file a complaint with MDE. The MDE Office of School Improvement and Office of Accreditation will work with the CEC and school/district to understand the issues and identify corrective actions. See [Appendix F](#) for additional details about violations, corrective actions, and sanctions.



CEC MEMBERSHIP: RECOMMENDATIONS

WHO SERVES ON A CEC?

The CEC shall include a “broad spectrum of the community” (See [Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5](#)). Potential community representatives may include:

- Economic developers
- Elected officials
- Civic leaders
- Business leaders
- Faith-based leaders
- Social services
- Nonprofit organizations
- School attendance officers
- Law enforcement officials
- Health department officials
- Daycare providers
- Librarians
- Parents
- Local industry workers
- Retirees
- College students
- Volunteers (e.g., City Year volunteers)
- Others with the knowledge and resources that can be leveraged to build strong communities
- PK–12 educators (school and district faculty and staff)

Each community should determine what a “range of community members” looks like in their district and/or school(s). The number of members on each CEC may vary. However, the CEC should be representative of the community. MDE recommends each CEC include 10–12 members. The graphic below recommends community representative types based on the council type.

			
Elementary School Council	Middle School Council	High School Council	District Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Business leaders Community members/leaders Early childhood representatives School liaison Grade P–8 teachers, assistant teachers, and administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Business leaders Community members/leaders Higher education representatives School liaison Grade 5–8 teachers, assistant teachers, and administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Business leaders Community members/leaders Higher education representatives School liaison Students Grade 9–12 teachers, assistant teachers, and administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Business leaders Community members/leaders Early childhood representatives Higher education representatives District liaison Students P–12 teachers, assistant teachers, and administrators

Communities should also consider whether their CEC represents the diversity of their community and multiple ages, races, ethnicities, genders, and abilities. Also, communities should consider varied geographic representation to ensure all parts of the community are represented. One way to do this is to ensure CEC members come from various neighborhoods or school zones.

WHAT ARE THE DESIRED TRAITS AND DISPOSITIONS OF CEC MEMBERS?

All CEC members should be committed to improving their community schools. Other traits and dispositions are included below. The ideal CEC member:

- Is connected to the school community
- Focuses on the needs of all students
- Listens actively to the ideas of others
- Seeks to understand different perspectives
- Works with others to solve problems
- Attends meetings regularly
- Seeks to come to consensus
- Navigates difficult conversations respectfully
- Advocates for underserved students



HOW DO VARIOUS STAKEHOLDER GROUPS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CEC?



Business Leaders

Local businesses employ current students and future graduates. They also want their employees to have access to good schools. Business leaders can help bring the community together around a shared effort. They also may have unique expertise or resources to contribute to CEC efforts.



Community Members/Leaders

Community members and leaders know the community. They are not employed by the school system and do not have a child enrolled in school. However, they can offer time, expertise, and dedication. They often share feedback from others within the community. They also can help build community support for school improvement initiatives.



Early Childhood Representatives

Student learning begins before students enter elementary school. Daycare providers, preschools, Head Start programs, and other early childhood programs help ensure students are ready for kindergarten. They are important partners in school improvement efforts, particularly at the elementary level.



Higher Education Representatives

Mississippi students should be college and career ready when they graduate. Higher education representatives can share information about readiness gaps exist. They can also be important partners in increasing access to advanced coursework. Middle and high schools can benefit greatly from having higher education representatives on their CEC.



Students

Students are impacted most by the work of the CEC. Their experiences and voices are critical. MDE recommends that all high school and district CECs include students. All student members must be at least 12 years of age.



Parents

Parents want quality schools for their children. They have firsthand experience with schools that they can share. Like students, their voices and experiences are critical. When possible, parents serving on the CEC should not be the same parents serving in leadership roles on the PTA/PTO. This increases the number of parents in leadership roles.



School/District Liaison

The school/district liaison should be an employee of the district and is typically appointed by the Superintendent. This member helps ensure the CEC is aware of major initiatives, changes, and progress of the school or district. The liaison also helps share information with the school or district.

WHO GOVERNS CECs?

Districts and schools do not govern CECs. The CEC and district leadership, including the superintendent, may engage in discussions with the CEC; however, CECs are responsible for running their own meetings. Each CEC should set its own principles to govern how meetings will run. This guidance includes sample operating principles in [Appendix B](#).

CECs should identify the individuals who will help facilitate and support the implementation of the CEC. CECs can select officers or identify specific roles to ensure that meetings are productive. Each CEC can determine its own structure. MDE provides the following sample roles as examples:

OFFICER/ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Chair/Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-creates meeting agendas with the Vice-Chair• Leads meetings• Ensures all CEC members feel comfortable sharing information• Identifies next steps for the CEC• Ensures the CEC publicly reports progress to the community as required in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5 (see Appendix E for template)
Vice-Chair/Co-Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-creates meeting agendas with the Chair• Assumes responsibilities of the Chair when Chair is absent
Secretary/Notetaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sends the agenda at least three days prior to the meeting• Takes attendance• Takes notes during meetings• Sends notes to CEC members within a week of the meeting
Communications Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serves as liaison between CEC and school/district• Shares information about the CEC with the community• Creates and maintains CEC social media pages• Handles access/link for virtual meeting attendance, if applicable

CEC MEETINGS: RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD CECs SET UP MEETINGS?

MDE recommends that established CECs meet at least six times per academic school year. Schools and districts creating new CECs should meet seven times per academic school year during the first year to allow time for establishing the CEC.

The CEC should establish a meeting schedule at the beginning of the academic school year. Meetings should be scheduled at times that are convenient for the members. Often, evening meetings are best for working parents and community members. It may also be possible to hold virtual meetings at lunchtime.

All meetings should be open to the public. It is important that CEC officers share meeting times in advance so that other community members can attend.

MDE recommends that meetings be between 60 and 90 minutes and no longer than 90 minutes in length. This provides enough time for members to engage deeply in discussion without placing an undue burden on them. Below are two sample sequences of meetings.

SAMPLE 1: DISTRICT-LEVEL CEC – 1ST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

MEETING	POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS
Meeting #1 January	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish norms • Introduce members and officers • Review purpose of CEC • Establish operating principles (see Appendix C) • Introduce district strategic plan (i.e., its purpose, who creates it, how to read it) • Meet district leadership
Meeting #2 February	Meeting preparation: Review district strategic plan Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review district report card • Meet with district leadership to learn about current efforts to address the district strategic plan • Ask district leadership questions about the district strategic plan and district report card • Begin to co-identify CEC goal with district leadership to focus on in future meetings
Meeting #3 March	Meeting preparation: Gather feedback from stakeholders about the identified goal Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define challenges for the CEC to focus on for the remainder of the year • Conduct a root cause analysis to determine why the challenge exists



MEETING	POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS
Meeting #4 March	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential action steps • Finalize action steps • Seek feedback from district • Prepare community update
Meeting #5 April	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share status update of action steps • Plan and problem solve as needed
Meeting #6 May	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare report • Celebrate progress • Identify vacancies for upcoming year that will need to be filled

SAMPLE 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-LEVEL CEC

MEETING	POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS
Meeting #1 September	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce members • Revisit operating principles (see Appendix B) • Review purpose of CEC • Provide overview of the school improvement plan and report card (i.e., what it is, who creates it, how to read it)
Meeting #2 October	Meeting preparation: Review school improvement plan and report card Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with school leadership to learn about current efforts to improve school • Identify potential goals to focus on that are aligned with school improvement plan and report card • Plan to gather additional feedback from stakeholders • Coordinate a time with school leadership to talk with elementary school students about their school experience
Meeting #3 November	Meeting preparation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with elementary school students to discuss their experience (subset of CEC) • Gather feedback from community about potential goals Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss feedback gathered from stakeholders • Define challenges for the CEC to focus on for the remainder of the year • Conduct a root cause analysis to determine why the problem is occurring
1:1 Calls December	<i>CEC leaders call each CEC member to check in on their experience thus far. CEC leaders reflect on calls and identify ways to improve future meetings.</i>

MEETING	POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS
Meeting #4 January	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential action steps • Finalize action steps • Seek feedback from school leadership • Prepare community update
Meeting #5 February	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share status update of action steps • Plan and problem solve as needed
Meeting #6 March	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share status update of action steps • Plan and problem solve as needed
Meeting #7 May	Meeting agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate progress • Prepare report

HOW DOES THE CEC WORK WITH SCHOOL OR DISTRICT LEADERSHIP?

Each school or district should identify a staff member to serve as a liaison between the CEC and school or district leadership. The superintendent may appoint someone to this role. This person needs to be available to CEC members. Often, this may be a district director or a family engagement coordinator. While the superintendent may engage with CEC membership through an appointee, they do not direct the work of the council.

The CEC should contact the school/district liaison if it needs support or wants to meet with school or district leadership. The school/district liaison is also the primary contact if the CEC would like to meet with or present to the school board.

The CEC can request additional information or data from the district or school. For example, a CEC might review the Acceleration Data from the Mississippi Succeeds Report Card and want to know more details about how many students participated in each type of accelerated course (e.g., Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate). The CEC should contact the school/district liaison with the request. The school/district will then determine what data it can share. Please note that federal laws may limit the types of information schools/districts can share, and data shared cannot include any personally identifiable information (PII) so that individual students will not be identifiable to the CEC members.



WHAT DO EFFECTIVE CECs DO?

All CECs shall focus on school improvement. Effective CECs do the following:

Schedule meetings at times that are convenient for most members. For most members, meetings held in the evenings are convenient.

Review relevant data. Each CEC should review data to inform its goal-setting. In many cases, it is helpful to review data with the district or school leaders. They can provide important context about what the data mean. District and school leaders can also share what they are doing to address current gaps in student achievement outcomes, such as disparities in academic performance in English Language Arts and mathematics for various student subgroups (i.e., racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, limited English-proficient status, economically disadvantaged students, and gender).



DISTRICT CEC	SCHOOL CEC
District strategic plan	School improvement plan, if applicable
District report card	School report card
District climate data (i.e., discipline, attendance, staff turnover rate, etc.)	School climate data (i.e., discipline, attendance, staff turnover rate, etc.)

Focus efforts. Each CEC should focus on one goal per year. At each meeting, discussions should center on how to make progress toward the selected goal.

Develop a clear engagement plan. Each CEC should create an engagement plan that identifies how the CEC will increase awareness of the school improvement goal. It should also state how the CEC will involve the community in its efforts.

Involve student voice. Students are most impacted by the work of the CEC. It is important to consider their perspectives and experiences.

Seek perspectives from other community members. CEC members are engaged members of the community. Each CEC member should talk with their networks and share their concerns and feedback at meetings.

Leverage skills and community resources. CEC members bring a variety of skills and resources to the council. The CEC should work together to pool resources to ensure success.

Talk with school/district leaders. Successful CECs work in collaboration with school and district leaders. CECs should invite school and district leaders to serve as thought partners. School and district leaders can provide important context. CEC members should also talk about academics, school improvement, and policies with school and district leaders.

Deepen knowledge. Education is full of abbreviations and complex terms. School and district leaders should share information in ways that are accessible to all community members. Leaders should help CEC members understand policies and data as needed.

Make policy recommendations. Based on its review of data and feedback, the CEC may identify whether a change is needed to an existing policy or identify that a new policy is needed. **CECs do not have the authority to set policy.** CECs can recommend changes to school/district leadership and/or the school board.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES THAT CECs MIGHT SUPPORT?

CECs should select activities aligned with their goal for the year. The activities should complement rather than duplicate school or district efforts. Whenever possible, CECs should leverage resources from the greater community.

Examples include working with the district to help identify after-school supports for students within the community, hosting book or school supply drives to collect materials for distribution to students within the community, or connecting faith-based organizations with students in need of support.

HOW CAN CECs INFLUENCE POLICY?

CECs do not have the authority to set policy. However, CECs can recommend policies or policy changes. CEC leadership should share policy recommendations with school/district leadership and/or the school board.

Example: Student tardiness has been identified as a concern by the CEC. As a result, the council has decided to move forward with recommending a change to school start times.

- A high school CEC reviews the school report card.
- The CEC decides to focus on improving student attendance.
- The CEC contacts the school liaison and requests to meet with school leadership. During the meeting, the principal shares additional student attendance data, such as reasons why students are late.
- The CEC talks with students and parents.
- The CEC researches best practices on student attendance strategies.
- The CEC believes that delaying the school start time by 30 minutes would decrease tardiness. The CEC wants to propose a policy shift.
- The CEC contacts the school liaison to schedule meetings with school and district leaders and the school board. The CEC, school leaders, district leaders, and school board members share their perspectives and talk through the pros and cons of a delayed start time.
- The CEC submits a request to be on the agenda during the public comment period of an upcoming school board meeting to share the work and recommendations of the council.
- The school board decides to add the policy change to an upcoming agenda.



CECs can also influence local policy.

Example: Youth violence has been lifted as a concern by the council, and as a result, the CEC wants to propose recommendations to local school and community leaders addressing youth violence.

- A CEC looks at school discipline incidents. The community is concerned about youth violence, both inside and outside of school.
- The CEC meets with school leadership and community members to get their perspectives.
- The CEC decides to meet with local law enforcement to suggest changes in their policies on how they address youth violence, which has impacts within and outside of schools.
- The CEC cannot change policy directly, but it can help be a voice for the larger community. The CEC meets with the police chief and signs up to give public comment at a town meeting.



HOW CAN CECs INVOLVE STUDENT VOICES?

Students often have opinions and ideas about how to improve their schools. They attend school daily and have important perspectives and experiences to share. CECs should engage students in age-appropriate ways.

High school students can be active participants in CEC discussions. They benefit from leadership experience and can offer problem-solving and creative thinking.

MDE recommends having at least two student members serve on high school and district CECs. The student liaisons should participate in CEC meetings and share information back with the student body.

CECs will need to collaborate with the high school to find student members. All student members of CECs must be at least 12 years of age and have consent to participate from their parent/guardian. **Student members should be representative of all students, not just those that are the highest performing.** Some strategies for recruiting student members include:

- **Create new student council position(s)** – High schools can add one or more CEC Liaison positions as student council opportunities. Students then vote to select their liaisons just like they do for other student council positions.
- **Create a nomination or application process** – High school students can have an opportunity to apply to be a liaison. CECs can create a form that parallels the form used to nominate community members. A subset of the CEC should then select student members based on submitted forms.
- **Invite student members** – The CEC can work with school leaders, guidance counselors, and social workers to identify students to serve as liaisons. These staff members should work to identify students who would benefit from a leadership position and offer a unique perspective. Personal invitation to serve may increase the prestige of the position.

Elementary, middle, and high school students can share their experiences with CEC members. For example, the CEC can work with school leadership to set up a meeting with students. During this meeting, CEC members can ask students about their school experiences. Students can share what is important to them or what they would like to see improved at their school. Prior to these meetings, parents/guardians should give consent for their students to participate.



Districts can share school climate (i.e., discipline, attendance, staff turnover rate, etc.) and student survey data with CECs. This information can help CECs understand how students view their school experience.

Most districts will already have some survey data to share. If a CEC would like to administer a survey, it must work with the school and district. The school/district will need to help vet the survey content, and the CEC will need to follow school/district survey protocols for administration.

HOW SHOULD CECs REPORT PROGRESS PUBLICLY?

The CEC shall publicly report progress to the community (See [Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5](#)). Each CEC can determine a method that works best for their community. The report should describe:

- The area of focus for the CEC specific to school improvement
- Progress made during the current school year
- Challenges or obstacles faced
- Identified next steps

MDE includes a sample form in [Appendix E](#). This form should be posted publicly on the school or district website. Other potential ways to report progress include:

- Sharing regular updates at school board meetings
- Sharing a brief video via social media
- Inviting the community to a brief update meeting (virtual or in person)
- Sharing a written update via district communications channels (e.g., email blast, newsletters)



DISTRICT AND SCHOOL SUPPORT OF CECs: RECOMMENDATIONS

WHERE SHOULD DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE ON CECs?

Districts and schools should share information about opportunities to serve on CECs in a variety of places in the community, such as:

- Well-attended school events
- Well-attended community events
- Head Start centers
- Daycare centers
- Community centers
- Public parks
- School newsletters
- Restaurants
- Gyms
- School board meetings
- Grocery stores and convenience stores
- Barbershops
- Libraries
- Places of worship
- Chamber of commerce meetings
- Civic and cultural organizations
- Economic and community development organizations
- Healthcare providers
- Universities, colleges, technical colleges, and trade schools
- District and school websites
- Social media (e.g., district/school Facebook/Twitter/Instagram page)

All communications should be written in an accessible format. Translate materials in communities where languages other than English are spoken.

HOW SHOULD DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS SUPPORT CECs?

Both districts and communities benefit when they work collaboratively. The district can help the CEC learn more about the district and school and support CEC efforts. In turn, the CEC can help gather community input, secure resources, and offer ideas to the district in support of school improvement.

The district and school do not govern the CEC. However, districts and schools are accountable for creating CECs and should support CECs with their work. The superintendent has a critical role in shaping the relationship between the district and the CEC. Recommended supports include access, resources, and expertise.

Identify a liaison. Each school/district should identify a staff member to serve as a liaison. The liaison must be available to the CEC. The liaison serves as the primary contact for the CEC. The liaison supports the CEC and helps set up meetings with school and district leadership. The liaison is also the primary contact if the CEC wants to meet with or present to the school board.

Offer meeting space. Offer CECs an accessible place to meet with ample parking. This space should include internet access so CEC members can access the [Mississippi Succeeds Report Card](#) and any other materials. Ensure CEC members know the guidelines for facility usage.



Print materials needed for the meeting. Provide printed copies of School Improvement Plans to all CEC members. Consider providing a printed report card summary as well.

Provide supplies. Give CEC leadership access to a copier. Provide chart paper, markers, sticky notes, and other basic supplies.

Support communications. Support CEC external communication efforts. For example, post CEC meeting schedules, notes, and membership lists on a school or district website.

Elevate student voice. Help CECs hear from students. Share anonymous student survey data. Create a new CEC liaison student council role. Coordinate focus groups where CEC members talk with students.

Communicate openly. Establish a positive rapport with CECs. Create clear lines of communication between CEC leadership and school or district leadership. It may be helpful for the superintendent or principal to meet regularly with the CEC. Acknowledge CEC suggestions and provide feedback when appropriate. For example, if there are reasons why a school or district cannot adopt a CEC's idea, share that information.

Offer accommodations. Help CECs ensure that meetings are accessible to all. Arrange for translators when needed. If possible, offer childcare and provide food during evening meetings.

BOARD OF EDUCATION SUPPORT OF CECs: RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS OF EDUCATION SUPPORT CECs?

Local school boards are responsible for governing the district and setting policies. Although CECs are unable to set policy, they provide valuable perspectives and insight that may inform school policies. School boards should work closely with CECs to ensure that CECs have an opportunity to regularly engage with school boards and the larger district community. Recommended practices include:

Provide opportunities for information sharing. Create opportunities for the CEC to share regular updates with the larger community. This could be by providing CECs space on a board of education agenda to provide updates or by encouraging CECs to speak during open comment portions of the agenda. If printed meeting agendas or notes are shared at meetings, offer to include CEC meeting minutes as well.

Communicate openly. Establish a positive rapport with CECs. Create clear lines of communication between CEC leadership and the school board. It may be helpful for the school board chair to meet regularly with the CEC. Acknowledge CEC suggestions and provide feedback when appropriate.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INFORMATION

WHY ARE SOME SCHOOLS REQUIRED TO HAVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a federal law, requires MDE to identify low-performing schools. The law requires MDE to identify three types of schools:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)
- Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)

MDE identifies a school as CSI if:

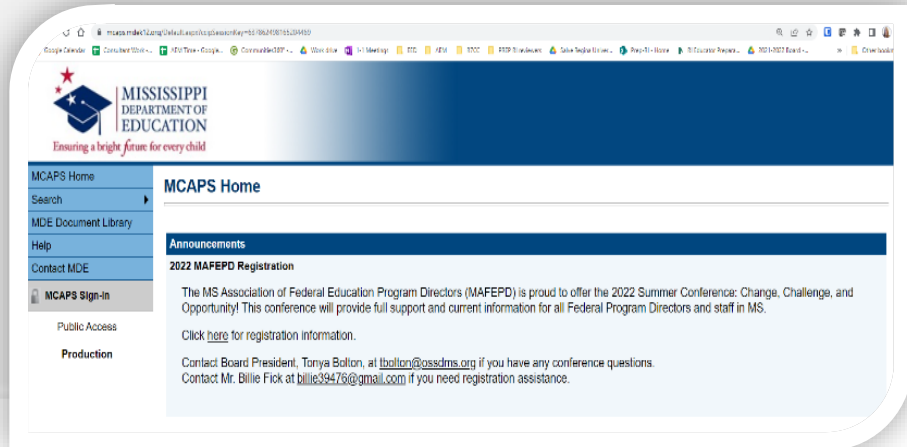
- The school is in the lowest 5% of Title I schools
- A school is Title I and does not improve after being identified as a school with subgroups performing below the lowest 5% of the state’s Title I schools
- The school has a graduation rate of 67% or below (high school only)

MDE identifies a school as TSI or ATSI if the school has one or more student subgroups determined to be underperforming.

Any school identified as CSI, TSI, and ATSI shall develop an improvement plan. Both the local school board and MDE shall approve a CSI plan. The local school board shall approve a TSI and ATSI plan unless the district is receiving federal funds to support the work.

KEY RESOURCE: MCAPS

You can access approved school improvement plans on this site.



Visit MCAPS here: <https://mcaps.mdek12.org>.



SUPPORTS FOR CECs

MDE develops and provides support through on-site and virtual training with CECs. MDE is also available to provide additional support as needed. If you have questions about this guidance, please reach out to the Office of School Improvement staff at cec@mdek12.org.



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APPENDIX A: GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Community Engagement Councils: Guidance Development Process



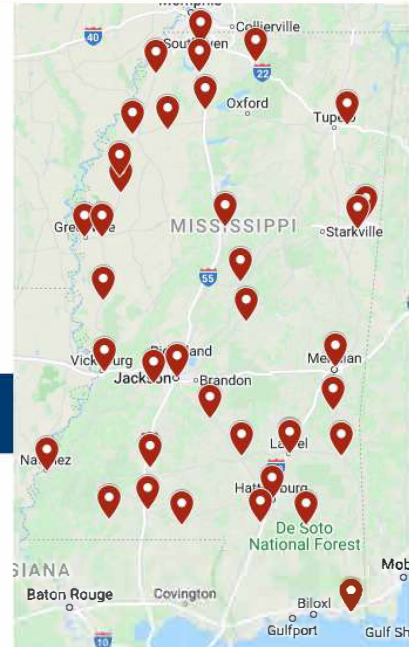
MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

In 2022, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC) collaborated to develop new guidance of Community Engagement Councils (formerly known as P-16 Councils).

January: Survey

R7CC collected information about current implementation of P-16 Councils via a survey.

- Emailed the survey to 400+ P-16 Council members
- Shared survey at Mississippi School Improvement Conference
- Received input from 139 respondents from 37 districts
- Included representation from parents, students, community members, and school/district staff



Map: Representation in survey sample by school district of P-16 Council

March: Focus Groups & Interviews

R7CC held small-group conversations to learn more about P-16 Council member experiences and to gather suggestions for improvement.

- Held 4 focus groups and talked with 24 P-16 Council members and community organizations
- Presented themes to MDE

April: Drafted Guidance

MDE and R7CC drafted guidance based on survey results, focus group themes, and MDE priorities.

May: Focus Groups and Interviews

R7CC gathered feedback on draft revised guidance from 11 P-16 Council members and community organization leaders.

- Held 2 focus groups and 3 interviews
- Presented feedback to MDE

June to November: Revisions and Resource Development

MDE and R7CC revised guidance based on feedback and developed additional resources to support implementation.

December: Board Presentation

MDE will present new guidance at board meeting.



APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This table summarizes changes from previous guidance (emphasis added).

PREVIOUS GUIDANCE	CURRENT GUIDANCE
<p>“The P-16 Council is an independent organization.” (p. 15)</p>	<p>“CECs are self-governed. CEC members are responsible for running meetings. However, the CEC and school/district must work together to be successful.” (p. 5)</p>
<p>“P-16 Councils are to primarily focus on developing policy recommendations for the school district and/or school that will solve the challenges that the local district or school is facing.” (p. 4)</p>	<p>“The CEC works with the school or district to support school improvement. The group is ‘inclusive, accountable, and required to share progress publicly’ (See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5).” (p. 5)</p>
<p>“The P-16 Council has the authority to determine its own priorities after examining the strengths and limitations of the local school district or school for itself.” (p. 15)</p>	<p>“Each year, the CEC sets a goal. The CEC should set the goal based on a review of [school and district data] which districts or schools shall provide to councils.” (p. 5)</p>
<p>P-16 Council creation process led by district:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) P-16 Initiators Meeting 2) P-16 Selection Meeting 3) P-16 Formation Meeting <p>(pp. 5–14)</p>	<p>Process led by district:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Communicate information about CECs 2) Hold an information session about CECs 3) Gather interest forms or nominations 4) Host elections to select CEC members <p>Once the CEC is formed, CEC members will select officers. District personnel may serve as members of the CEC; however, teachers and administrators may not participate in the voting process to select CEC membership, even if they live in the local community. “The process for selecting CECs must prioritize community members.” (p. 8)</p>
<p>“The P-16 Council must include participation from six constituent categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Members of local community-based organizations working on public education issues within the local school district; 2) Members of local school district Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations; 3) Members of local public school-based student councils and local public school student government associations; 4) Community leaders, public officials, and members of the business community, all within the local school district; 5) Community members <i>at large</i> interested in public education issues who may or may not have been part of the other 4 categories 6) Members of the school district or school” <p>(pp. 8–9)</p>	<p>“Each CEC includes parents, educators, students, and community members.” (p. 5)</p> <p>“The CEC shall include a ‘broad spectrum of the community’ (Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5)... Each community should determine what a ‘range of community members’ looks like in their context... However, the council should be representative of the community.” (p. 10)</p>



APPENDIX C: OPERATING PRINCIPLES TEMPLATE

MDE provides the following template for CECs as one possible example of how CECs can establish operating principles. When creating operating principles, the CEC Chair/Facilitator may replace highlighted text with community-specific information if this template is selected for use. The CEC is encouraged to modify this template to reflect its desired operating principles.

This template was modified with permission from South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) (<https://sic.sc.gov/>).

School/District Name CEC Operating Principles

Article 1 NAME OF ORGANIZATION

The name of the organization is the School/District Name CEC.

Article 2 PURPOSE

- (A) The purpose of the CEC Name is to:
 - (1) support school improvement efforts
 - (2) provide public updates on the council’s progress
- (B) The council will not have the powers and duties reserved by law or regulation to the local school board.

Article 3 NUMBER AND TYPE OF CEC MEMBERS

- (A) The community will strive to select a CEC that is representative of the diversity of the community. The CEC will be made up of the following representatives:
 - (1) # parents
 - (2) # business leaders
 - (3) # community members
 - (4) # school/district liaisons
 - (5) # early childhood representatives
 - (6) # higher education representatives

Article 4 ELECTION PROCEDURES

- (A) Annually or when a vacancy exists, the CEC will host an information session to share information about the CEC nomination/interest form process. The CEC will collect nomination/interest forms electronically, by mail, and in person.
- (B) Within ## days of nomination/interest form collection, an election will be held for community members (not teachers and school/district staff) to select representatives to fill open positions.
- (C) In the rare case of a mid-term vacancy, the CEC will vote to determine whether to host a mid-year election or to keep the position vacant until the nomination and election process at the beginning of the next school year. A two-thirds vote of the elected CEC membership is required to keep the position vacant until the next school year.



Article 5
TERMS OF OFFICE

- (A) The term of office for elected CEC members is # years. Terms will be staggered.
- (B) There is no limit on the number of terms that a CEC member may serve.

Article 6
CEC OFFICERS

- (A) The officers of the Organization Name CEC will consist of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Communications Liaison. The term of office for CEC officers is # years.

Article 7
DUTIES OF OFFICERS

- (A) The Chair is responsible for leading all CEC meetings. The Chair co-creates meeting agendas with the Vice-Chair. The Chair identifies next steps for the CEC. The Chair must ensure that the CEC publicly reports progress to the community as required in *Miss. Code Ann. § 37-18-5*.
- (B) The Vice-Chair leads meetings and assumes the responsibilities of the Chair in their absence.
- (C) The Secretary sends an agenda at least three days prior to the meeting. The Secretary takes attendance and notes during meetings. Within a week of the meeting, the Secretary sends notes to CEC members.
- (D) The Communications Liaison is responsible for sharing information about the CEC with the community. The Communications Liaison creates and maintains CEC social media pages and shares information with the larger community.

Article 8
MEMBERSHIP RESIGNATION AND VACANCIES

- (A) A CEC member can resign at any time by giving written notice to the Chair.
- (B) In the event that a CEC member resigns prior to the end of their term, the CEC Chair and district leader (superintendent for district council or principal for school council) can jointly recommend an interim member to fulfill the vacancy for the remainder of the year. The interim member would need to be nominated/elected the following year as described in Article 4.

Article 9
MEETINGS

- (A) The first regular CEC meeting of the school year will be held no later than Date.
- (B) The CEC meeting schedule will be posted on the school/district website, included in the monthly school calendar, and/or otherwise posted in a prominent location in the school. The CEC will strive to schedule regular meetings on days and times that meet the needs and preferences of parents and community members, as well as teachers and administrators.
- (C) The CEC will meet at least eight times per year.
- (D) All CEC meetings are open to the public, and anyone showing an interest in the CEC and its activities will be encouraged to attend. Persons who wish to be placed on the agenda must submit a request to the CEC at least five days before the meeting date. The Chair has the option to schedule a segment of the agenda for open comments from the public as needed and as time permits.
- (E) The principal or their designee will be scheduled on the agenda of every regular CEC meeting to share information on school activities, successes, and concerns.



Article 10
CEC DECISION MAKING

(A) Whenever possible, the CEC will make decisions by consensus. If voting is necessary, a simple majority vote will be sufficient to constitute an action of the CEC. A simple majority of the voting members of the Council will constitute a quorum so long as at least one parent and one teacher representative are present.

Article 11
TRAINING

(A) At the beginning of each school year, district leadership and CEC officers will ensure that members have access to information about their roles and responsibilities as well as information on school and local district policies and procedures.

Article 12
AMENDMENTS

(A) These operating principles may be amended at any regular CEC meeting by a two-thirds vote of those present, provided that the amendments (1) were previously introduced at a regularly scheduled meeting held within the last three months, (2) were included in the minutes of that meeting and distributed to all members, and (3) are listed as an agenda item for the current meeting.

Date Approved: [Place date here.]
Date Revised: [Place date here.]



APPENDIX D: CEC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

DEADLINE	REQUIRED INFORMATION	DETAILS AND EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE	SUBMISSION COMPLETE?	DATE SUBMITTED
December	Date(s) communications shared about opportunities to serve on the CEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies of flyers Screenshots of social media postings Minutes from meetings with information about CEC highlighted 		
December	Date(s) of CEC information sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign-in sheets Meeting agendas 		
December	Date range during which interest forms/nomination forms were solicited and collected	Copies of interest forms/nomination forms submitted by interested community members		
December	Membership list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First and last names of all CEC members and leadership roles, if applicable Email addresses for all CEC members 		
December	Meeting calendar	Meeting calendar		
May	Meeting details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting attendance sheets Agenda and minutes from each meeting 		
May	Date(s) of public reports from the CEC to the community	<p><i>Each council may determine the best format for the public report. Acceptable evidence includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written reports or updates Recordings of presentations Video updates 		



APPENDIX E: CEC PROGRESS REPORT TEMPLATE

This template provides the minimum information that CECs should share with their community.

CEC ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

District Name:

School Name (if applicable):

CEC Members:

1. What goal did the CEC identify for this school year?
2. Why did the CEC select this goal?
3. What action steps has the CEC taken? How has the CEC worked with the district and community?
4. What successes have been achieved?
5. What challenges remain?
6. What next steps will the CEC take?
7. How can community members contact the CEC if they have additional questions or want to get involved?



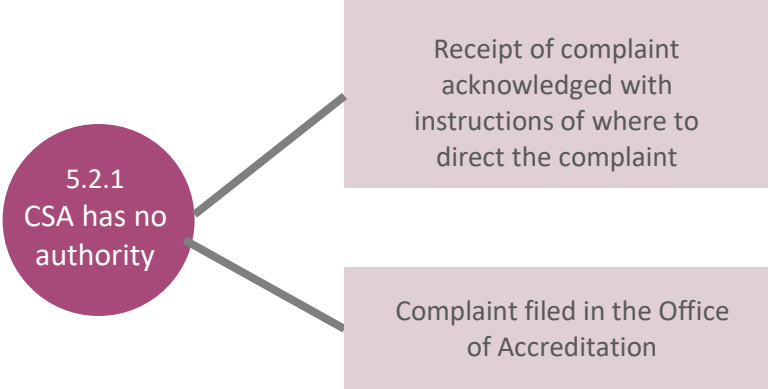
APPENDIX F: VIOLATIONS, CORRECTIVE ACTIONS, AND SANCTIONS

This section addresses non-compliance with implementation of Process Standards 12, 12.1, and 12.2 of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

All formal complaints made against schools or districts shall be submitted to the Office of Accreditation in writing and include the name and contact information (valid phone number or valid email address) of the individual(s) filing the complaint. The written complaint shall contain specific details concerning alleged violations. While the Office of Accreditation may receive anonymous complaints, these complaints are not considered formal. Additionally, the Office of Accreditation shall not provide any details regarding the status of a complaint and/or investigation. See Accreditation Policy 5.0.

5.2.1 Areas Over Which the Commission On School Accreditation Has No Authority

If the complaint addresses an area over which the Commission on School Accreditation (CSA) has no authority, receipt of the complaint is acknowledged with instructions of where to direct the complaint, and the complaint is filed in the Office of Accreditation. The CSA does not have authority to overturn decisions made by local school boards, nor does it have jurisdiction to investigate allegations of discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment, or violations of the Public Records Act. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and/or Office of Civil Rights and the Mississippi Ethics Commission have jurisdiction over these matters. The MS Ethics Commission also has authority to enforce the provisions of the Open Meetings Act and issue civil penalties for violations.



For more information, visit www.mde12.org/complaints.

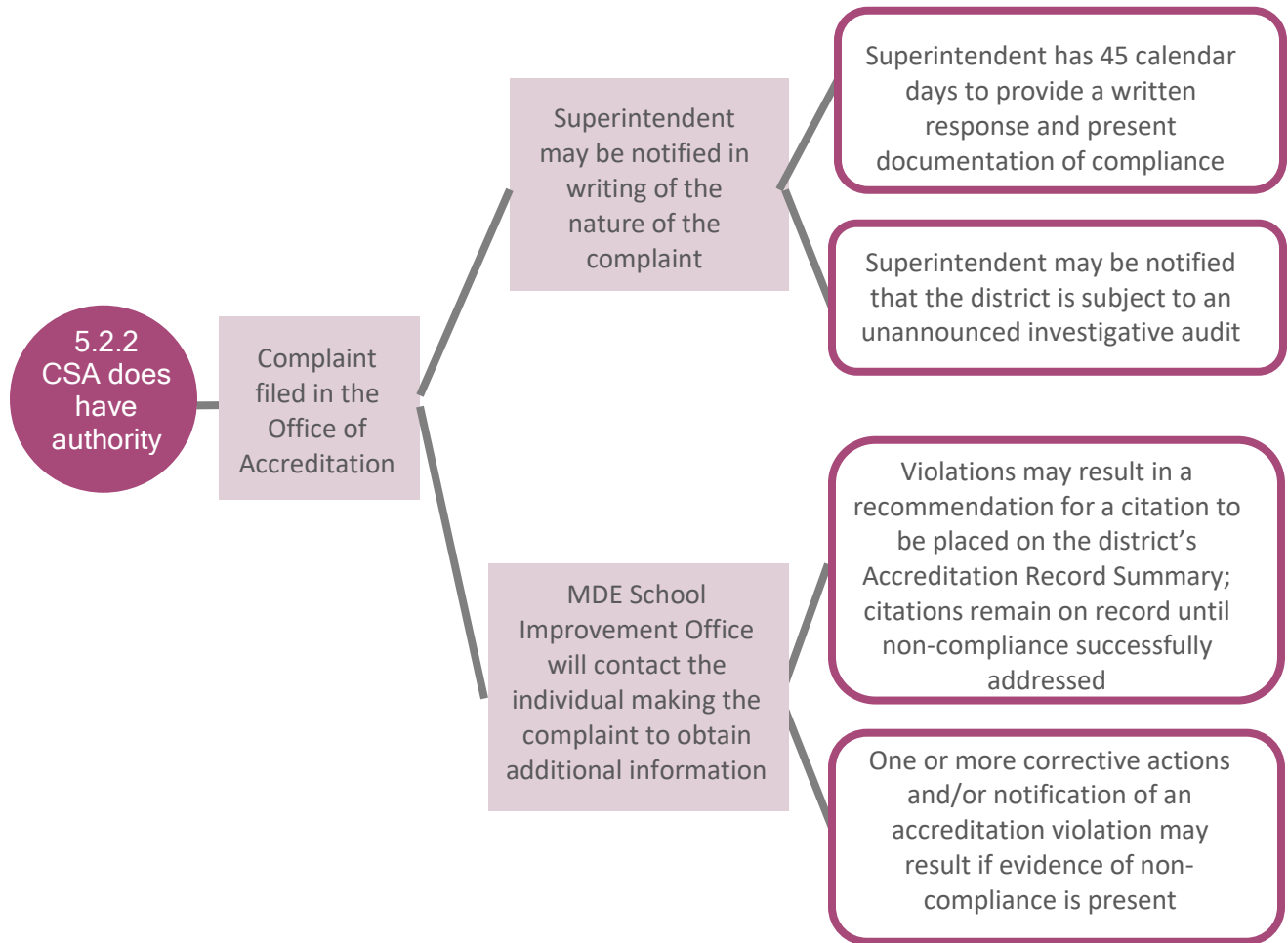
5.2.2 Areas Over Which the Commission On School Accreditation Does Have Authority

If the complaint addresses an area over which the CSA has authority, the superintendent may be notified in writing of the nature of the complaint and given forty-five (45) calendar days to provide a written response to the allegations and to present documentation of compliance. The district superintendent may also be notified that the district is subject to an unannounced investigative audit.

1. Following a review of the complaint received by the MDE School Improvement Office, a representative from the MDE Office of School Improvement will contact the individual making the complaint to obtain additional information.

A complaint that presents evidence of non-compliance may result in one or more corrective actions and/or notification of an accreditation violation which may result in a corrective action or a sanction of probation due to non-compliance with the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability* process standards.

Violations may result in a recommendation for a citation to be placed on the district’s Accreditation Record Summary. The Office of Accreditation will note the citation of non-compliance on the district’s Accreditation Record Summary and notify the superintendent of this action. No immediate action to downgrade the district accreditation status will be recommended. This citation will remain on record until the district has successfully addressed the area(s) of non-compliance.



Examples of Non-Compliance	Action by MDE
Failing to establish council	Corrective Action and/or Sanction
Failing to work collaboratively	Corrective Action and/or Sanction
Failing to submit required documentation to substantiate existence	Corrective Action and/or Sanction
Failing to meet regularly	Corrective Action and/or Sanction
Failing to have broad range of members as outlined in the guidance	Corrective Action and/or Sanction
Failing to develop a comprehensive plan	Corrective Action and/or Sanction
Failing to regularly update the community on progress	Corrective Action and/or Sanction

A corrective action may be defined as an action that the district must take to become compliant with a finding of non-compliance of a process standard in the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

A sanction may be assigned if an act of non-compliance with a *Mississippi Public School Accountability* process standard has not been resolved within an MDE-determined timeframe. A sanction will require a corrective action by the district and may result in the district's accreditation status being downgraded. If the district's accreditation status is downgraded, it will be required to develop and implement a corrective action plan with defined timelines in which to correct the district's deficiencies (Accreditation Policy 2.8).

Reconstitution or Reformation of a Community Engagement Council

Reconstitution or reformation of a CEC will be required when the following exist, as determined by MDE:

- The district and council have not met the requirements for implementation, **and**
- The district and council did not complete the corrective action(s) assigned, **and**
- The district is placed on probationary status due to the non-compliance.

Reconstitution or reformation of a CEC in a District of Transformation (DOT) or a district that has been absorbed into the Achievement School District (ASD) shall be at the discretion of the DOT or ASD, in consultation with MDE.

