The “wall-to-wall,” innovative academy design model will provide a 6-year experience, beginning with 8th grade and ending in the senior year, that provides a small learning community around all students and continuity within teachers and curriculum and instruction across grade levels. It provides a clear course sequence with cohorted scheduling and a supportive team atmosphere. As we strive for equity, this instructional model has a governing structure that incorporates the views of all stakeholders and demonstrates evidence of partnerships around student success. It will provide rigorous learning opportunities that will prepare our students for college and career opportunities without the need for remediation and gives students clear access to career and post-secondary information necessary to make well informed decisions about their future. Career days, industry visits and exposure to innovation in elementary school exposes students early to college and career readiness skills and prepares them for Keystone, which will be taken in the 8th grade. Participation in these innovative models of learning will allow students to participate in project-based learning, which will strengthen cross curriculum project development and college and career work skills needed.

**Department Recommendation: Approve with all Waivers**

| **Process Standard** | **Requested waiver(s) from State or Local Policies, Requirements, or Restrictions** | **Rationale for Waiver Request** |
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| Standard 2 | 2. All district professional positions requiring licensed staff are filled by staff that are properly licensed and endorsed as required by state law and federal requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Miss. Code Ann. § 37-9-7 7, Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 80.1 and 80.2. State Board Policy Chapter 80, Rules 80.1 and 80.2, and ESEA, and Federal Code.  2.2 With the exception of academic core subjects, the professional staff in each school is comprised of no more than 5% of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) units working outside the area or areas of endorsement. Assistant principals and administrative interns who are not properly endorsed may be included in the 5% FTE working outside their area of endorsement, provided they do not act in the place of the principal. An appropriate license is required for superintendents, principals, librarians, and guidance counselors. | The district is aligning its master schedule to develop “pure” cohorts of teachers and students in each of the academic houses. Additionally, through thorough course review, the district is realigning course sequence and elective opportunities to best algin with student selected pathways.  Our district would like to receive a waiver from this requirement so that we can identify and potentially hire full time FTEs for these courses: ACE (Academy of Career Exploration) which will be the Keystone course offered to 8th grade students, CCR, as well as electives that align with each pathway.  By allowing industry experts to co-facilitate and teach these courses, we believe this will best support our goal of meeting the individualized needs of each academic house and its students. |
| Standard 13 | 13.The academic year provides a minimum of 180 teaching days in which both teachers and pupils are in regular attendance for scheduled classroom instruction. Any request for an exception to this standard must be submitted in writing to the Commission on School Accreditation for review and action. If the Governor has declared a disaster emergency or the President of the United States has declared an emergency or major disaster to exist in this state, the local school board may request approval from the State Board of Education to operate the schools in its district for less than one hundred eighty (180) days. Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151- 7(3)(c), Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-49, §§ 37-13-61 through 69, § 37-151-5(j), and § 37-151-7(3)(c).  13.1 The teaching day must provide at least 330 minutes of instruction per day. Miss. Code Ann. 37-13- 67.  13.2 The school district must ensure that during the academic school year a minimum of 140 hours of instruction is provided for each Carnegie unit of credit offered and 70 hours for each one-half (½) unit offered, except for remedial instructional programs, dual enrollment/dual credit, correspondence courses, MS Virtual Public School courses, and innovative programs authorized by the State Board of Education.  13.3 No more than two (2) of the 180 days may be 60% days. Both teachers and pupils must be in attendance for not less than 60% of the normal school day. Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-5(j). | The district would like to modify its instructional day to allow for a block of time each day that is designed for accelerated experiences for ALL students. This would allow dedicated time that we currently cannot fit into the schedule to support our efforts to address achievement gaps; truly implement early warning systems as we work to develop a consistent way to monitor attendance, grades, and behavior; increase counseling advisement through ISP development and career advisement, and career pathway exploration.  The number of minutes in each instructional day would not be reduced, instead 52 minutes each day would be designed specifically for the purpose of acceleration of all students. Students would be assigned to specific teachers for personalized differentiated supports. This would allow for improved equity and allow us to better serve not only our students in need of remediation, but also students that need additional enrichment opportunities.  Specifically, on our A/B schedule, we are requesting to modify each of the four traditional blocks from 94 to 84 minutes and build in the 52-minute enrichment block each day for acceleration. This would modify seat time for each Carnegie Unit Course from 140 hours to 126 hours.  Additionally, we are requesting that six of the 180 student days be exploratory learning days for our students. We plan to develop these days around civic engagement, problem-based learning opportunities, community partnerships and student needs.  These days will be fully developed, but outside the guidelines of a typical day. Students will be working on completion of project based learning activities, receiving interventions, participating in small group service projects, and taking field trips by academic house. Students may be participating in a variety of activities each day, and adults supervising the students may be ancillary faculty or staff ranging from elective teachers to coaching staff.  This allowance will provide the cohort of teachers, assigned to each academic house, the required cross curriculum planning time that must be documented to become a National Career Academy Model Site. This would be the only time throughout the year that the teachers could be pulled together for cross-curriculum professional learning as well as allowing them the necessary time to reach out to industry partners.  This request is largely due to the insurmountable challenges that transportation logistics create for developing an innovative schedule. Due to consolidation, our busses and routes cover a total of 484 square miles each day. We have significantly improved our bus fleet, but due to many challenges in hiring and retaining bus drivers, we are faced with doubling most of our routes. Currently, the district has 149 routes and 65 busses. Students are picked up as early as 6:30 to begin our elementary routes and secondary schools do not begin the process of dismissal until 4:00 p.m.  Although this is not related to the instructional day, it significantly impacts potential times that teachers can work with industry partners, plan with cross curricular teams and meet to review data as a part of the early warning system process. |