

OFFICE OF CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER
Summary of the State Board of Education Agenda Item
Consent Agenda
March 19, 2020

OFFICE OF ACCREDITATION

- C. Approval to revise Accreditation Policies in Miss. Admin. Code: 7-24, *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2019*
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments)

Background Information: The proposed revisions to the policies will bring the policies current with state law, and include the audit procedures, as well as fill gaps in procedures and processes involving accreditation and performance classifications.

The Commission on School Accreditation (CSA) met and voted unanimously to revise the policies of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2019* during a regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, October 3, 2019.

The public comment period was open through 5:00 p.m. on December 9, 2019, and no public comments were received.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

ACCREDITATION POLICIES OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1.0 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

The Education Reform Act of 1982 created the Commission on School Accreditation (CSA) to continuously review the standards on accreditation and the enforcement thereof and to make recommendations thereon to the SBE. See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-3.

1.1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

The CSA shall be composed of fifteen (15) members, as prescribed in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-3 and shall consist of two (2) classroom teachers, two (2) principals of schools, two (2) school district superintendents, two (2) local school board members, and seven (7) individuals who are not actively engaged in the education profession.

No local school district shall be permitted to have more than one-member representative on the CSA.

1.2 APPOINTMENT

Each member of the CSA is appointed by the SBE upon recommendation of the State Superintendent of Public Education.

1.3 TERMS OF OFFICE

The length of a regular term is four (4) years. Upon acceptance of appointment, each member is eligible to serve for two (2) consecutive terms. If a member changes employment or accepts a position that is no longer reflective of the category for which he or she was appointed, or if a member moves out of the Congressional district he or she was appointed to represent, that member must resign and a new member will be appointed to fill the unexpired term. A member of the CSA who is appointed to fill an unexpired term is eligible for appointment to his or her own term(s) of office.

1.4 GENERAL DUTIES OF COMMISSION ON SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

The SBE, acting through the CSA, shall establish and implement a permanent performance-based accreditation system, and all public elementary and secondary schools shall be accredited under this system. It shall be the purpose of the CSA to continually review and enforce the standards on accreditation and to make recommendations to the SBE.

1.5 OFFICERS

The CSA annually elects a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The CSA may designate a member to serve as presiding officer in the event the chairperson and vice-chairperson are unable to preside.

1.6 MEETINGS

The CSA meets on call of the State Superintendent of Public Education. Any official action taken by the CSA requires the presence of a quorum, which is defined as a majority of the membership. The CSA shall provide notice of the meetings, which notice shall include the date, time, place and purpose of each CSA meeting. Any member of the CSA may participate in an official meeting by teleconference or video means.

1.6.1 *Agenda*

The Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Chairperson, shall prepare the agenda which is to be considered by the CSA.

All requests to be placed on the agenda shall be received in writing by the Executive Secretary no later than ten (10) days before a scheduled meeting. Agenda items received after this deadline may only be added if approved by a majority vote of the CSA.

The Executive Secretary shall provide the proposed agenda, with supporting documents, to each CSA member, no later than seven (7) days prior to a scheduled meeting.

Further distribution of the agenda shall be made to all interested parties, all persons appearing before the CSA, and to the media.

1.6.2. Minutes

The Executive Secretary shall prepare the minutes of the CSA. The Executive Secretary may secure such assistance as is necessary for the preparation of the minutes.

All proposed minutes shall be provided to each CSA member within seven (7) days prior to any scheduled meeting.

All proposed minutes shall become the official minutes, after adoption by the CSA.

1.7 EXPENSES

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 25-3-41 and 25-3-69, each member of the CSA is reimbursed for per diem, travel, and other allowable expenses that are incurred when attending meetings of the CSA.

1.8 STAFF

Staff assigned to the CSA consists of personnel in the MDE. An appropriate staff member of the MDE shall be designated and assigned by the State Superintendent of Public Education to serve as Executive Secretary and coordinator for the CSA.

2.0 DISTRICT ACCREDITATION POLICY

The SBE, acting through the CSA, is required to establish and implement a process for accountability at the public school district level. School districts are held accountable for Accreditation Policies and Process Standards and receive an annual accreditation status. Standards of the performance-based accreditation system recommended by the CSA and adopted by the SBE are contained in the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

2.1 ASSIGNMENT OF DISTRICT ACCREDITATION STATUSES

In the fall of each school year, the CSA determines the annual accreditation status of all public school districts based on verified accreditation data from the previous school year. An annual district accreditation status is assigned based on compliance with Process Standards. Information concerning district compliance with Process Standards is reported to the CSA on an annual basis. See Policy 2.2.

The district superintendent and school principals are responsible for ensuring that all data reported to the MDE are true and accurate as verified by supporting documentation on file in the school district. Reporting false information is a violation of the accreditation requirements set forth by the SBE and may result in the downgrading of the district's accreditation status.

After the CSA acts on accreditation records presented during the fall, the district superintendent and the chairperson of the local school board are notified of the assigned status. The decision of the CSA is final unless

appealed by the school board of the school district to the SBE in accordance with the appeal procedures in Policy 6.0 of this document. If a school board of the school district does not request a hearing before the CSA, they waive their right to any appeal of the CSA's decision.

2.2 PROCESS STANDARDS

Process (input) Standards address accepted educational principles and practices that promote educational quality. Any verified violation of a Process Standard is noted on the record summary of a school district at the time of discovery within any school year; however, it does not affect the current accreditation status of the district. See Policy 2.5 for the exceptions. If a noted violation of a Process Standard has not been corrected by the following school year when accreditation statuses are assigned, the violation is reported to the CSA for appropriate action.

The SBE, acting through the CSA, reserves the right to suspend school district compliance of any Process Standard that is not mandated by state or federal law. See Policy 4.2 for Rewards.

2.3 ACCREDITATION STATUSES DEFINED

Districts are assigned an annual accreditation status based on compliance with Process Standards and Accreditation Policies.

ACCREDITED is assigned to a district that complies with Accreditation Policies and 100% of the Process Standards. (See exceptions in Appendices F and H.)

PROBATION is assigned to a district that fails to comply with 100% of the Accreditation Policies and Process Standards. The district will be required to develop and implement a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with defined timelines to address the deficiencies. See Policy 2.8.

WITHDRAWN is assigned to a district that has previously been assigned a PROBATION status and has failed to comply with its CAP within the approved timelines. It may also be assigned to a district found in violation of any Process Standards contained in Policy 2.5.2. Any school district placed in a District of Transformation may have its accreditation withdrawn. The district will be required to develop and implement a CAP with defined timelines to address the deficiencies. See Policy 2.8.

2.4 NOTIFICATION OF DEFICIENCIES AFTER ASSIGNMENT OF STATUS

After the annual assignment of a district's accreditation status in the fall, the process of determining statuses for the following school year begins. Whenever information on file with the MDE indicates that a school district may be in violation of a standard, the superintendent and the school board of the district are notified in writing by appropriate MDE staff responsible for monitoring compliance with the standard. School district officials are given forty-five (45) calendar days from the date of receipt of notification to provide a written response verifying accuracy or inaccuracy of the notice of possible noncompliance with the standard.

If the written response includes sufficient evidence to correct or refute the alleged violation, the superintendent of the district is notified by appropriate MDE staff responsible for monitoring compliance with the standard. Any verified violation of a standard is reported in writing to the Office of Accreditation, where it is noted on the current Accreditation Record Summary of the district. The Office of Accreditation notifies the superintendent of the district in writing of the verified violation.

2.5 FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT AN IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN ACCREDITATION STATUS

An assigned accreditation status may remain unchanged during that school year except in those cases where verified noncompliance of accreditation standards may downgrade an accreditation status immediately, in accordance with Policy 2.5.1 or 2.5.2.

2.5.1 Recommended Accreditation Status – PROBATION

Districts in violation of any of the following standards may be presented to the CSA for action, that may include downgrading the district's accreditation status to Probation:

- Accreditation Policy 2.1, reporting false information,
- Standard 1.1 and 1.3, failure to implement appropriate standards of governance,
- Standard 1.2, failure to comply with school board policies that meet state and federal statutes, rules, and regulations,
- Standards 4 and 5, failure to comply with financial accountability requirements,
- Standard 14, failure to comply with graduation requirements,
- Standard 16, failure to comply with test security procedures required by the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System,
- Standards 17.1-17.8, failure to comply with state/federal regulations,
- Standard 20, failure to comply with Instructional Practices, or
- Standards 29, 30, and 31, failure to comply with standards that sustain a safe school climate.

2.5.2 Recommended Accreditation Status – WITHDRAWN

Districts in violation of any of the following standards may be presented to the CSA for action that may include withdrawal of the district's accreditation:

- Accreditation Policy 2.1, reporting false information,
- Standard 1.1 and 1.3, failure to implement appropriate standards of governance,
- Standard 1.2, failure to comply with school board policies that meet state and federal statutes, rules, and regulations,
- Standards 4 and 5, failure to comply with financial accountability requirements of a serious nature,
- Standard 14, failure to comply with graduation requirements specified in Standards 14.1, 14.2, and 14.5,
- Standard 16, failure to comply with test security procedures required by the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System in Appendix F, numbers 8 and 9,
- Standards 17.4-17.6, federal programs whose regulations call for strong sanctions for continued patterns of noncompliance,
- Standard 20, failure to comply with Instructional Practices, or
- Standards 29, 30, and 31, failure to comply with standards that pose life-threatening conditions for students and staff.

2.6 RESOLVING ACCREDITATION CONTROVERSIES

All controversies involving the accreditation statuses of school districts are initially heard by a duly authorized representative of the CSA in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-5, and Policy 6.0, unless a recommendation is made regarding a State of Emergency under Miss. Code Ann. §37-17-6(12)(b). See Policy 2.9.

2.7 CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS OR RECONFIGURATIONS OF SCHOOLS

2.7.1 When two (2) or more school districts consolidate, the affected school district(s) may, depending on the nature and applicability, have any current citations applied to the consolidated district until the consolidated district has provided evidence of compliance of the violation and the Office of Accreditation has verified compliance.

2.7.2 When a local school board approves the reconfiguration of a school within the same district the school district may be allowed to maintain its accreditation status.

See Section 20 of the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for additional explanation of how performance classifications (grades) are assigned to reconfigured schools/districts.

2.8.1 Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with Definitive Timelines

When a school district has been assigned a PROBATION or WITHDRAWN accreditation status, the school district shall develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with defined timelines in which to correct the district's deficiencies.

The school district is required to submit a CAP within sixty (60) calendar days of notification. The plan shall stipulate what will be done to remove the deficiencies and the timeline required in accordance with Miss. Code Ann § 37-17-6(11)(b). The plan shall be approved by the local school board as documented by official minutes and bear the signatures of the school board chairperson/president and district superintendent. The SBE has final approval on the CAP and the timelines. When corrective action has been implemented to remove a citation, the school district shall submit documentary evidence confirming such to the Office of Accreditation. Assigned MDE staff may conduct follow-up visits as necessary to verify corrective action and compliance.

2.8.2 Withdrawal of Accreditation

If the district fails to correct the deficiencies during the time specified in the CAP, the school district may have its accreditation withdrawn by the CSA in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a). The status of the district will be listed as WITHDRAWN NOT ACCREDITED, and the record of that district will continue to be maintained.

2.8.2.1 Hearings

Before requesting approval from the SBE to withdraw the accredited status of a district, the CSA shall conduct a hearing to allow the officials of the affected district to present evidence or other reasons why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a) and Policy 6.0.

2.8.2.2 Results of Hearings

Upon consideration of the transcribed record and recommendation of the CSA's representative, the CSA shall meet, make a decision and notify all parties in writing by certified mail. Within forty-five (45) calendar days of the conclusion of the hearing and after consideration of the results of the hearing, the CSA shall be authorized, with the approval of the SBE, to withdraw the accreditation of the district and may issue a request to the Governor that a state of emergency be declared in that district in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a). If the decision is made not to withdraw the accredited status of the district, a new timeline is established in the district's Corrective Action Plan (CAP).

2.8.2.3 Public Notice

If a state of emergency has been declared, the CSA files a public notice at least once a week for at least three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper published within the immediate or general vicinity of the affected school district in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(13).

2.8.2.4 Access to School District Records

School districts are required to produce necessary reports, correspondence, financial statements, and any other documents necessary for the CSA to implement this section on withdrawal of accreditation and District of Transformation.

2.8.2.5 Reinstatement of an Accredited Status

Based on the recommendation from the Office of Accreditation or the State Superintendent of Public Education, the superintendent and school board chairperson/president of a school district whose accreditation has been withdrawn may file a petition with the CSA on School Accreditation for reinstatement of accreditation to be effective on January 1 or July 1. The CSA shall require all school

districts that petition for reinstatement of accreditation to appear before the CSA to furnish evidence satisfactory to the CSA that the school district is compliant with all accreditation standards prior to the reinstatement of accreditation.

2.9 CONDITIONS OF EMERGENCY STATUS AND WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION

2.9.1 Declaration of State of Emergency

The SBE may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency in any school district in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6. Upon the declaration of the state of emergency by the Governor, the SBE may take all such action for dealing with the school districts as authorized under Miss. Code Ann. § (12) or (15), including the withdrawal of the district's accreditation.

2.9.2. State of Emergency Hearing Procedures

Pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12), there are several avenues for the SBE to make a request to the Governor to declare a state of emergency.

2.9.2.1 Withdrawal of Accreditation Hearing and Subsequent State of Emergency

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a), the CSA shall conduct a hearing to determine whether a school district's accreditation should be withdrawn based on failure to comply with their CAP or violations of accreditation standards that may require immediate action. Based on the CSA's consideration, if the CSA, with the approval of the SBE, withdraws the accreditation of a school district, the SBE shall be authorized to request to the Governor that a state of emergency be declared in the district. See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-5, Policy 2.8.2, and Policy 6.0 for hearing procedure.

2.9.2.2 Extreme Emergency Situation Hearing

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b), the MDE's Office of Accreditation shall present evidence to the CSA to support the existence of an extreme emergency situation in the school district that jeopardizes the safety, security, and educational interests of the children and the belief that the emergency situation is related to a serious violation or violations of accreditation standards or state or federal law or failure to meet academic standards as evidenced by a continued pattern of poor student performance. This presentation shall not exceed forty (40) minutes.

Following the MDE's Office of Accreditation's presentation, district representative(s) which shall include, the superintendent and school board chairperson/president, will address the CSA. While the district may have legal representation, **only** district employees and/or school board members may address the CSA during the forty (40) minutes allowed for the district to present evidence pertinent to this matter.

Following the presentations, the CSA will be allowed to address MDE staff and local district representatives to ask any clarifying questions.

Once all questions have been asked by the CSA, the attorney for the district (if applicable), and the attorney for the MDE, will be allowed ten (10) minutes each to provide closing arguments.

Based on the evidence presented, the CSA acts in one of the following manners:

- Accepts the recommendation of MDE and determines that an extreme emergency exists. The CSA submits the resolution to the State Superintendent of Public Education and the State Board of Education; or
- Rejects the recommendation of MDE.

In accordance with the resolution from the CSA that an extreme emergency exists, the SBE meets to:

- Accept the CSA’s determination that an extreme emergency exists, and requests the Governor to declare a state of emergency; or
- Reject the CSA’s determination that an extreme emergency exists.

Any request made to the Governor, shall contain an expiration date, which automatically rescinds the request to the Governor if the Governor fails to declare a state of emergency after a specified time period. This expiration date shall be set by the SBE.

2.9.2.3 Failing District

The MDE Office of Accreditation may present evidence to the SBE that the school district meets the SBE’s definition of a failing school district (“F” designation) for two (2) consecutive years. No prior action by the CSA is necessary.

The SBE may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency in that school district.

2.9.2.4 More than 50% of the schools are Schools At-Risk

The MDE Office of Accreditation may present evidence to the SBE that more than 50% of the schools within the school district are “schools at-risk” (i.e., failing schools identified as “F”) in any one (1) year. No prior action by the CSA is necessary.

The SBE may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency in that school district.

2.9.3 Achievement School District

In the alternative, the SBE may consider a school district for inclusion in the Achievement School District (ASD), in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-17 if it meets the definition of Failing District or more than 50% of the schools are Schools At Risk, as found in Policy 2.9.2.3 and 2.9.2.4, and meets the following criteria established by the State Board of Education:

- The Mississippi Achievement School District shall only take over the number of districts for which it has the capacity to serve; and
- District must have been identified as an “F” district for two (2) consecutive years or two (2) of three (3) consecutive years; and
- 50% or more of the schools are rated as an “F” school; and/or
- 50% or more of the students in the district are in an “F” school.

2.9.4 Penalty for the Withdrawal of Accreditation

Policy 2.9.3 is effective one (1) calendar year following the Withdrawal of Accreditation by the CSA and the SBE.

The withdrawal of a school district’s accreditation by the CSA will result in the following:

- A school or schools within a district shall be limited to participation in no more than fifty percent (50%) of the regular season of any interscholastic activity, which shall include division/district/regional games,
- The interscholastic season schedule for a school or schools within a district shall not include the opening day of season or any type of post season participation, as determined by the Office of Accreditation, and
- Cheerleading, drill and dance squads, speech and debate, choral music, and band may participate in district or state contest, but shall not be eligible to receive ratings.

All schedule requests shall be submitted in writing to the MDE’s Office of Accreditation, at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the season. The Office of Accreditation shall pre-approve all schedules and participation in interscholastic activities. In addition to the suspension of all post season activities, the school district shall not be allowed to participate in jamborees, special games, parades, tournaments, holiday tournaments, or competitions of any nature.

Failure to comply with section 2.9.3 will result in the suspension of ALL interscholastic activities.

Failure of a district to have its accreditation reinstated by the CSA after a period of two (2) calendar years from the date of the withdrawal of accreditation shall result in the immediate suspension of ALL interscholastic activities until the district’s accreditation status is reinstated.

Note: Interscholastic activities include, but are not limited to, football, basketball, baseball, track and field, cross country, tennis, golf, volleyball, softball (fast pitch and slow pitch), soccer, wrestling, swimming, power lifting, bowling, archery, cheerleading, drill, and dance squads, speech and debate, choral music, and band.

3.0 PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATION POLICY

The SBE, acting through the CSA, is required to establish and implement a process for accountability at the individual public school level and district level in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6. Individual schools and districts are held accountable for: 1) student proficiency, 2) student growth, 3) graduation, 4) acceleration, 5) college- and career- readiness, and 6) participation, if applicable, and receive an annual School Performance Classification and District Performance Classification.

When the district establishes a new school and/or the district reconfigures the specific grades or students assigned to an existing school(s) within the district, the student proficiency data used to assign school performance classifications will follow the guidelines established in the School Performance Standards and the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

3.1 ASSIGNMENT OF PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATIONS

3.1.1 School Performance Classification

Information concerning school performance is reported to the CSA on an annual basis, and performance classifications are assigned in the fall of each school year. In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(5), each public school will be assigned an annual performance classification. In addition, the graduation rate will be included in determining the performance classification of schools with a Grade 12. See Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 7.1 and 7.2, State Board Policy Chapter 7, Rules 7.1 and 7.2 and the Glossary for definition of alternative school. Note: Refer to the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for exceptions.

3.1.2 District Performance Classification

Information concerning district performance is reported to the CSA on an annual basis, and performance classifications are assigned in the fall of each school year. Each public school district will be assigned an annual performance classification based on proficiency, growth, graduation rate, acceleration, college- and career- readiness, and participation. A district performance level is assigned based on the performance of all students in the district [i.e., the district will be treated as one (1) K-12 school].

3.1.3 Internal Review of Preliminary Accountability Results

If the school district has reason to believe the preliminary results of the statewide accountability system applied to a district or school are incorrect due to a calculation or data error, the school district may

submit written evidence to the Office of District and School Performance, to support the position of the school district. All requests for review shall be submitted in writing based on the timeline published each year by the Office of District and School Performance. Any requests not submitted based upon the published timeline shall not be considered after the deadline for submission.

The Office of District and School Performance will review these requests and present them to an Internal Review Committee for consideration. The Internal Review Committee will consist of, at a minimum, four (4) MDE staff, and one (1) external chairperson.

The Office of District and School Performance shall present the decision(s) of the Internal Review Committee to the CSA for consideration.

3.1.4 Review or Appeal of Final Accountability Results

If the school district disagrees with the decision of the SBE, the school district may submit written evidence to appeal the final results of the statewide accountability system approved by the SBE. Only appeals based on results believed to be incorrect due to a calculation or data error, shall be considered. The appeal shall be submitted to the Executive Secretary of the SBE within ten (10) calendar days of the SBE's approval. Only school districts that have contested preliminary results may seek an appeal of the decision of the SBE. Any school districts that have not contested preliminary results will have waived their rights to appeal the final results of the statewide accountability system.

For those applicable appeals to the final results, the same process shall be followed as a request for review (i.e., Internal Review Committee, CSA, and SBE); however, during the appeal of the final results, school districts will receive notification of the Internal Review Committee's decision prior to presentation to the CSA. The district superintendent may request to address the CSA regarding the appeal of the results. The district superintendent shall be allotted thirty (30) minutes to address the CSA. The MDE shall also be allotted thirty (30) minutes to address the CSA. The CSA may ask questions of either the District or the MDE following their presentation. The CSA shall not consider any new factual evidence, not previously provided to the Internal Review Committee. The CSA will make a recommendation to the SBE for approval. At the SBE meeting, the district superintendent shall be allotted ten (10) minutes to address the SBE. The MDE shall also be allotted ten (10) minutes to address the SBE. The SBE may question either the district superintendent or the MDE following their presentation. The SBE shall not consider any new factual evidence. The SBE may either affirm or deny a school district's appeal. The SBE makes the final determination of the appeal's disposition.

3.2 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance (output standards) address selected components of the statewide assessment program and other outcome measures related to the performance of a school and/or district. The SBE also considers factors such as proficiency and growth, graduation rates, dropout rates, college- and career- readiness, acceleration, participation, and any other factors the SBE deems appropriate.

3.3 PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATIONS

The performance classification assigned to a school or district will be determined by performance indicators as defined in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System. These indicators are scored and combined to assign performance classifications of **A, B, C, D, and F**. See Performance Standards.

A school may not receive a school performance classification if the test data have been invalidated, and the school performance classification will be noted as Test Data Invalidated. (See Section 18 of the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for exceptions.) See Appendix F.

3.4 SCHOOLS AT-RISK

Following an analysis of school data each year, the MDE shall identify those schools that are deficient in educating students and need improvement in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-18-3 and 37-18-5. This analysis shall indicate individual school performance based on the annual performance classifications (grades).

3.4.1 Designation

A school shall be identified as a School At-Risk and in need of assistance if the school is designated as an F as identified by the SBE. A school that is failing and that is identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Target Support and Improvement (TSI), or Additional Target Support and Improvement (ATSI), as outlined in the Mississippi Consolidated State Plan (Mississippi Succeeds), shall be recognized as a School At-Risk.

3.4.1.1 Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Identification

- **METHOD 1:** graduation rate less than or equal to 67% (identification in 2018-19 based on 2017-18 data; subsequent identification every 3rd year); or
- **METHOD 2:** bottom 5% of Title I A schools (identification in 2018-19 based on 2017-18 data; subsequent identification every 3rd year)
- **METHOD 3:** previously identified Additional Targeted Support and Improvement school with 3 consecutive years of subgroup proficiency performance (ELA or math) at or below that of all students in the bottom 5% of Title I A schools (identification for this group to begin in 2021-22)

3.4.1.2 Target Support and Improvement (TSI) Identification

- Subgroup in the lowest 50% of overall accountability index; and
- Subgroup in lowest quartile of 3-year average gap-to-goal; and
- Subgroup scores in lowest quartile of 3-year improvement toward gap-to-goal closure; then
- Schools with a subgroup meeting all three (3) of the above criteria will be rank-ordered annually, using overall accountability index, and the bottom 5% of all schools not identified for CSI will be identified for TSI.

3.4.1.3 Additional Target Support and Improvement (ATSI) Identification

For all schools, 3-year average subgroup performance is at or below that of all students in the lowest performing schools (bottom 5% of Title I A schools) (for example: identification in 2018-2019 based on 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 data; subsequent annual identification based on most recent 3-year data trend).

3.4.2 Notification

Within fifteen (15) days after a School At-Risk has been identified, written notice shall be sent by the MDE, on behalf of the SBE, by e-mail and mail to the school principal, local superintendent, and the local board of education.

For All Schools At-Risk and CSI schools, the district shall create a team, consisting of the superintendent, a board member, the principal, specified district level staff, a content area teacher, and a parent or community member representative from the identified school, to participate in a cross-agency

interview with MDE personnel to address the school's performance. The school team shall lead a presentation from a template provided by the MDE, addressing topics, including but not limited to, leading and lagging data, equitable access, leadership, instructional transformation, talent development, and culture shift. Following the interview, the superintendent shall receive verbal and written feedback on the presentation prepared by the interview team and shall utilize this feedback to inform decision-making and plan for school improvement.

3.4.3 Plan of Improvement

The school shall complete a plan for improvement, which shall be approved by the local board of education as documented by official minutes and bear the signatures of the school board chairperson/president and district superintendent. The MDE shall provide final approval for school improvement plans of schools with a CSI designation. The MDE will monitor the plan implementation of failing schools that are identified as CSI. The local school district shall monitor the plan implementation of Schools At-Risk that are not identified as CSI.

The principal or designee shall provide an update addressing progress toward the plan's action steps each month to the community during the monthly local school board meetings. The update and a copy of the school board meeting agenda shall be submitted to the MDE. The school will continue to implement the approved plan until the release of the accountability performance ratings in the subsequent year.

4.0 RECOGNITION AND EXEMPTIONS

The SBE shall provide special recognition to individual schools or school districts meeting the highest level of performance as defined as a school or district with a performance classification of an "A."

The SBE may provide certain exemptions to individual schools or school districts assigned the performance classifications of an "A" or "B."

4.1 RECOGNITION

Special recognition shall be provided to all schools meeting the highest level of performance. Examples of recognition include, but are not limited to, public and/or media announcements and events.

4.2 EXEMPTIONS

4.2.1 Exemptions for Schools Assigned a Performance Classification of "A" or "B"

Schools assigned a performance classification of "A" or "B" may be exempt from citations of noncompliance with the Process Standards listed below:

- Library Media/Organized Collection (Standard 18.1)
- Library Media Program of Service (Standard 18.2)
- Limit on Course Preparations (Standard 25)
- Student Teacher Ratios in Grades 1-4 (Standard 28.2)
- Limit of 150 Students Per Teacher in Academic Core Subjects (Standard 28.5)

4.2.2 Exemptions for Districts Assigned a Performance Classification of "A" or "B"

School districts assigned a performance classification of "A" or "B" may be exempt from citations of noncompliance with the Process Standards listed below:

- Community Involvement, Parental Communication, and Business Partnerships (Standard 12)
- Senior Preparation for Graduation Ceremonies (Standard 13.4)
- Summer School Program Requirements (Standard 13.5)
- Professional Development Plan/Program (Standard 15)

- Early Childhood Programs (kindergarten and teacher assistant) (Standard 17.1)
- Instructional Management System (Standard 20)
- Suggested Teaching Strategies, Resources, and Assessment Strategies (Standard 20)

4.2.3 Financial Rewards

See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-19-10 for information regarding the School Recognition Program.

5.0 ACCREDITATION MONITORING PROCEDURES

The MDE continuously monitors school districts to verify compliance with applicable accreditation requirements and state and federal laws.

5.1 ON-SITE EVALUATIONS

The SBE, the State Superintendent of Public Education, or the CSA has the authority to call for an on-site evaluation or investigation of a school district at any time. If deficiencies are found in meeting accreditation standards or state and/or federal laws, the district superintendent shall be notified in writing and given forty-five (45) calendar days from the receipt of notification to provide a written response. The report of findings is filed in the current accreditation records in the Office of Accreditation.

5.2 INVESTIGATIVE AUDITS (COMPLAINTS AGAINST DISTRICTS)

All formal complaints made against schools or districts must be submitted to the Office of Accreditation in writing and include the name and contact information (valid phone number or valid e-mail 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.

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

If the complaint addresses an area over which the 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, and 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 Mississippi Ethics Commission also has authority to enforce the provisions of the Open Meetings Act and issue civil penalties for violations.

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.

5.2.3 Unannounced On-Site Investigative Audits

The SBE, the State Superintendent of Public Education, or the CSA has the authority to call for an on-site investigation of a school district at any time. Procedures for conducting investigative audits are as follows:

5.2.3.1 The auditor(s) may arrive in the district without prior notification. The number of auditors involved will depend on the nature and seriousness of the allegations.

5.2.3.2 The auditor(s) inform the district superintendent of the purpose of the audit and of the procedures to be followed. The auditor(s) will provide the district superintendent with a letter of notice from the State Superintendent of Public Education.

5.2.3.3 The auditor(s) may use various methods to collect the data needed to verify or discredit the complaint, including, but not limited to, examination of official records, anonymous surveys, interviews with school personnel, and observations.

5.2.3.4 The auditor(s) may attend all regularly scheduled and special-called board meetings of the district. The district superintendent and board chair shall notify the auditor(s) in advance of the date and time of all regularly scheduled and special-called board meetings.

5.2.3.5 Near the completion of the on-site investigation, the auditor(s) will schedule a time to meet with the superintendent and school board chair to conduct an exit conference.

5.2.3.6 Upon completion of the investigation, the auditor(s) compile a written report in accordance with Policy 5.8 that shall be provided to the district superintendent and the chairman of the school board, and depending on the recommendation of the MDE, may be addressed with the CSA.

5.3 SPECIAL TEST AUDITS

Reports regarding potential testing irregularities or test security violations are referred to the Office of Student Assessment. Such reports shall include, but are not limited to, statistical analyses of test data conducted after each test administration, self-reported incidents, third-party allegations regarding violations of testing requirements, and irregularities noted during test security audits. Regular test security audits may be conducted prior to, during, and following each test administration to promote the integrity and security of the Mississippi Assessment System. The Office of Student Assessment will report to the Office of Accreditation each testing irregularity that has been verified as a violation of a testing requirement.

5.3.1 Self-reports or third-party allegations regarding testing irregularities may be either formal written reports (signed or unsigned) or verbal reports or complaints that may be made officially or anonymously and with or without documentary evidence.

5.3.2 If a third-party allegation addresses an area over which the SBE has no authority, the individual filing the allegation will be notified.

5.3.3 A self-report or allegation shall identify specific details concerning alleged violations of test security and/or testing irregularities to warrant an investigative audit.

5.3.4 Any statistical analysis that indicates a potential testing irregularity or test security violation will be reviewed and evaluated by staff in the Office of Student Assessment. If the review and evaluation of the statistical analysis indicate that further information is required to resolve or confirm the testing irregularity, the Office of Student Assessment may require that a school district investigate the potential irregularity and report its findings to the Office of Student Assessment. Any verified testing irregularity is reported to the Office of Accreditation for appropriate action.

5.3.5 Procedures for test security audits are as follows:

5.3.5.1 The auditor may arrive at the school without prior notification.

5.3.5.2 The auditor informs the school administrator of the purpose of the audit and of the procedures to be followed.

5.3.5.3 The auditor requests that the district superintendent be notified that a test audit is in progress.

5.3.5.4 The auditor uses the same methods to collect data as described in Appendix F.

5.3.5.5 The auditor reports the audit findings to the Office of Student Assessment. If the audit findings indicate that a testing irregularity has occurred, the Office of Student Assessment will notify the district superintendent. If the response from the district superintendent does not resolve the irregularity, the irregularity is reported to the Office of Accreditation for appropriate action.

5.4 SUMMER PROGRAM AUDITS

Each school district providing educational programs during the summer is required to report summer program data, including types of instructional programs provided, staffing, and enrollment. School districts offering summer programs may be audited to verify information contained in the annual Summer School/Extended Year Report.

5.5 UNANNOUNCED AUDITS

Unannounced audits are conducted by MDE staff or MDE-trained auditors under contract with the MDE. A limited number of accreditation standards are audited, and depending on the size of the district, this audit may include only a sample review of schools.

5.6 OTHER STATE/FEDERAL PROGRAM AUDITS

When audits or evaluations of other state or federal programs reveal verified noncompliance with state or federal program regulations, the areas of noncompliance are filed with the Office of Accreditation and placed on the district's Accreditation Record Summary.

5.7 ANALYSIS AND VERIFICATION OF ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

Accreditation staff in the MDE review annual personnel/accreditation information and other annual reports submitted by school districts. Staff will analyze and compare this information with any other accreditation data on record and notify responsible officials of any inconsistency in reporting or any apparent deficiency in meeting standards. Any information submitted by a school district may be verified through on-site visits. Upon request, the school district shall provide documentation necessary to validate compliance with accreditation requirements.

5.8 COMPILATION OF THE AUDIT REPORT

Procedures followed when reporting, interpreting, and responding to on-site audit findings are outlined in Policy 5.8.

5.8.1 A report of the on-site audit findings, including corrective actions with timelines, is compiled within forty-five (45) calendar days from the close of the audit. If additional time is needed for the compilation of the report, MDE will provide written notice of this timeline. The report, along with a cover letter stating the process standard(s) that the district failed to comply with will be mailed, e-mailed, or hand-delivered to the district. The cover letter will also provide MDE's recommendation to the CSA. Copies of the report shall be provided to the superintendent and the school board chair/president, and the CSA/SBE, if applicable.

5.8.2 If the MDE does not recommend any action (i.e., Probation, Withdrawal of Accreditation, or State of Emergency) be taken, the district shall respond to the site visit findings. The superintendent is given forty-five (45) calendar days from the day of receipt of the report, to respond in writing to any deficiency cited. The date the district's response is due in the Office of Accreditation is indicated in the report cover letter.

5.8.3 If the MDE's recommendation to the CSA is to downgrade the district's accreditation status to Probation, the MDE shall inform the superintendent and the school board of the district in writing that the district's accreditation status may be downgraded in accordance with Policy 2.5.1. Upon receipt of the notification from the MDE, the school board of a school district may request a hearing in accordance with Policy 6.0.

5.8.4 If the MDE's recommendation to the CSA is to withdraw the district's Accreditation, the MDE shall inform the superintendent and the school board of the district in writing that the district's accreditation status may be withdrawn in accordance with Policy 2.5.2. and Policy 6.0. The MDE's recommendation is only related to the withdrawal of the district's Accreditation status and not related to declaring a state of emergency.

5.8.5 If the MDE's recommendation to the CSA is to determine whether a state of emergency exists, then the MDE will follow the procedure prescribed in Policy 2.9.2.

6.0 HEARING AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

All controversies involving the accreditation of schools or school districts are initially heard by a duly authorized representative of the CSA before whom a complete record is made in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-5, unless a recommendation is being made to declare a state of emergency under Miss. Code Ann §37-17-6 (12)(b). See Policy. 2.9.2. This does not apply to appeals of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

6.1 REQUEST FOR HEARING

The school board of a school district may request a hearing by filing written notice with the executive secretary of the CSA within ten (10) calendar days of the written notification of the recommended CSA action.

6.2 AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMISSION

Upon receipt of the written request for hearing from the school board, the chairman of the CSA assigns, in writing, a duly authorized representative previously appointed by the CSA to hear the controversy.

6.3 HEARING PROCEDURES

6.3.1 The CSA's representative sets the time, place, and date for a hearing and notifies all parties of the time, place, and date of the hearing by certified mail, return receipt requested. All parties may be represented by counsel at the expense of the party. The hearing is conducted in such a manner as to afford all parties a fair and reasonable opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence pertinent to the issues and to cross-examine witnesses presented by the opposing party. The CSA's representative may permit any portion of the evidence to be submitted in the form of depositions or affidavits; and in case affidavits are received, an opportunity to present counter-affidavits is provided.

6.3.2 It is the responsibility of each party at the hearing to secure the attendance of such witness or witnesses as the party deems necessary or appropriate, and any expense connected with the attendance of such witnesses is borne by the party responsible for the attendance of the witness.

6.3.3 At least fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the hearing, parties represented by counsel and/or producing witnesses will provide a list containing the name, address, and telephone number of counsel and/or witnesses, and copies of all exhibits that will be produced at the hearing, to the other party or parties, and to the CSA.

6.3.4 In conducting the hearing, the CSA's representative is not bound by common law or by statutory rules of evidence or by technical or formal rules of procedure, provided, however, hearsay evidence, if admitted, is not the sole basis for the determination of facts by the CSA's representative.

6.3.5 After presentation by the MDE regarding recommended action and policy in support thereof, the party filing the written notice of hearing has the burden of going forward with the evidence, and at the conclusion of the hearing, the CSA's representative grants any party the opportunity to present a statement in such party's own behalf, either in person or by such party's attorney.

6.3.6 All hearings held before the CSA's representative are recorded and transcribed by a court reporter whose fees and costs of transcription are paid by the school district involved within forty-five (45) calendar days after having been notified of such costs and fees by the CSA. Within thirty (30)

calendar days of receipt of the transcribed record of the hearing, the CSA's representative files a written recommendation to the CSA as to the resolution of the controversies. Upon consideration of the transcribed record and recommendation of its representative, the CSA shall meet, make its decision and notifies all parties in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the CSA is final unless the school board of the school district involved elects to appeal to the SBE.

6.4 APPEAL PROCEDURES

6.4.1 The school board of the school district may appeal to the SBE by filing a written notice of appeal with the State Superintendent of Public Education within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the decision of the CSA.

6.4.2 The notice of appeal should state with particularity the matters which, in the opinion of the school district, have been overlooked or mistakenly conceived in the decision of the CSA. An appeal to the SBE is on the record previously made before the CSA's representative and the CSA and is not intended as an opportunity for rearguing the entire case. No new factual evidence will be considered.

6.4.3 Upon receipt of the transcript, the SBE, through the State Superintendent of Public Education, notifies the parties involved that the transcript has been filed and that the appealing party has fifteen (15) calendar days to file any written argument not to exceed twenty-five (25) pages. The CSA is allowed fifteen (15) calendar days from the filing of the appealing party's filed written argument to file a responsive written argument not to exceed twenty-five (25) pages. Any written argument in rebuttal by the appealing party must be filed within ten (10) calendar days of the filing of the CSA's response. The appealing party may not exceed ten (10) pages in its rebuttal. An original and nine (9) copies of the written arguments shall be provided. The SBE considers all appeals within thirty (30) calendar days of the last written argument filed. There will be no oral argument before the SBE. The written decision of the SBE is transmitted to the parties involved within fifteen (15) calendar days of its decision.

6.4.4 School districts that appeal a final decision of the SBE shall be on the record and shall be filed in accordance with state law and local rules of procedure.

7.0 ANNUAL REPORT

By November 1 of each year, each local school district shall be required to develop and publish an annual report as prescribed by the SBE. The report shall be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the county and posted on the school district's web site in a printable format. The public notice shall include information on the report's availability on the district's web site, with the web site address, and the location(s) in the school district where a copy of the report can be obtained. Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-53 (1) (c), Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 18.1, State Board Policy Chapter 18, Rule 18.1.

ACCREDITATION POLICIES OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1.0 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

The Education Reform Act of 1982 created the Commission on School Accreditation (CSA) to continuously review the standards on accreditation and the enforcement thereof and to make recommendations thereon to the SBE. See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-3.

1.1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

The CSA shall be composed of fifteen (15) members, ~~with three (3) representatives from each of the five (5) Congressional Districts as established at the time the Commission was authorized by~~ as prescribed in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-3 and shall consist of two (2) classroom teachers, two (2) principals of schools, two (2) school district superintendents, two (2) local school board members, and seven (7) individuals who are not actively engaged in the education profession. ~~All appointments to the Commission shall comply with Section § 37-17-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, as amended.~~

No local school district shall be permitted to have more than one-member representative on the CSA.

1.2 APPOINTMENT

Each member of the CSA is appointed by the SBE upon recommendation of the State Superintendent of Public Education.

1.3 TERMS OF OFFICE

The length of a regular term is four (4) years. Upon acceptance of appointment, each member is eligible to serve for two (2) consecutive terms. If a member changes employment or accepts a position that is no longer reflective of the category for which he or she was appointed, or if a member moves out of the Congressional district he or she was appointed to represent, that member must resign and a new member will be appointed to fill the unexpired term. A member of the CSA who is appointed to fill an unexpired term is eligible for appointment to his or her own term(s) of office.

1.4 GENERAL DUTIES OF COMMISSION ON SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

The SBE, acting through the CSA, shall establish and implement a permanent performance-based accreditation system, and all public elementary and secondary schools shall be accredited under this system. It shall be the purpose of the CSA to continually review and enforce the standards on accreditation and to make recommendations to the SBE.

1.5 OFFICERS

The CSA annually elects a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The CSA may designate a member to serve as presiding officer in the event the chairperson and vice-chairperson are unable to preside.

1.6 MEETINGS

The CSA meets on call of the State Superintendent of Public Education. Any official action taken by the CSA requires the presence of a quorum, which is defined as a majority of the ~~present~~ membership. ~~Superintendents of school districts will receive written notice of the place, time, and date of each CSA meeting.~~ The CSA shall provide notice of the meetings, which notice shall include the date, time, place and purpose of each CSA meeting. Any member of the CSA may participate in an official meeting by teleconference or video means. ~~Individuals and/or groups who request a time slot on the agenda are required~~

~~to submit such in writing to the executive secretary. All requests for agenda consideration must be received by the executive secretary no later than seven (7) days prior to the meeting of the CSA.~~

1.6.1. Agenda

The Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Chairperson, shall prepare the agenda which is to be considered by the CSA.

All requests to be placed on the agenda shall be received in writing by the Executive Secretary no later than ten (10) days before a scheduled meeting. Agenda items received after this deadline may only be added if approved by a majority vote of the CSA.

The Executive Secretary shall provide the proposed agenda, with supporting documents, to each CSA member, no later than seven (7) days prior to a scheduled meeting.

Further distribution of the agenda shall be made to all interested parties, all persons appearing before the CSA, and to the media.

1.6.2. Minutes

The Executive Secretary shall prepare the minutes of the CSA. The Executive Secretary may secure such assistance as is necessary for the preparation of the minutes.

All proposed minutes shall be provided to each CSA member within seven (7) days prior to any scheduled meeting.

All proposed minutes shall become the official minutes, after adoption by the CSA.

1.7 EXPENSES

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 25-3-41 and 25-3-69, each member of the CSA is reimbursed for per diem, travel, and other allowable expenses that are incurred when attending meetings of the CSA. ~~The expenses are paid out of any funds available for the operation of the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE).~~

1.8 STAFF

Staff assigned to the CSA consists of personnel in the MDE. ~~The State Superintendent of Education designates one (1) staff member to serve as executive secretary.~~ An appropriate staff member of the MDE shall be designated and assigned by the State Superintendent of Public Education to serve as Executive Secretary and coordinator for the CSA.

2.0 DISTRICT ACCREDITATION POLICY

The SBE, acting through the CSA, is required to establish and implement a process for accountability at the public school district level. School districts are held accountable for Accreditation Policies and Process Standards and receive an annual accreditation status. Standards of the performance-based accreditation system recommended by the CSA and adopted by the SBE are contained in the current edition of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

2.1 ASSIGNMENT OF DISTRICT ACCREDITATION STATUSES

In the fall of each school year, the CSA determines the annual accreditation status of all public school districts based on verified accreditation data from the previous school year. An annual district accreditation status is

assigned based on compliance with Process Standards. Information concerning district compliance with Process Standards is reported to the CSA on an annual basis. See Policy 2.2.

The district superintendent and school principals are responsible for ensuring that all data reported to the MDE are true and accurate as verified by supporting documentation on file in the school district. Reporting false information is a violation of the accreditation requirements set forth by the SBE and may result in the downgrading of the district's accreditation status.

After the CSA acts on accreditation records presented during the fall, the district superintendent and the chairperson of the local school board are notified of the assigned status. The decision of the CSA is final unless appealed by the school board of the school district to the SBE in accordance with the appeal procedures in Policy 6.0 of this document. If a school board of the school district does not request a hearing before the CSA, they waive their right to any appeal of the CSA's decision.

2.2 PROCESS STANDARDS

Process (input) Standards address accepted educational principles and practices that promote educational quality. Any verified violation of a Process Standard is noted on the record summary of a school district at the time of discovery within any school year; however, it does not affect the current accreditation status of the district. See Policy 2.5 for the exceptions. If a noted violation of a Process Standard has not been corrected by the following school year when accreditation statuses are assigned, the violation is reported to the CSA for appropriate action.

The SBE, acting through the CSA, reserves the right to suspend school district compliance of any Process Standard that is not mandated by state or federal law. See Policy 4.2 for Rewards.

2.3 ACCREDITATION STATUSES DEFINED

~~In the fall of each year, every public school district~~ Districts are assigned an annual accreditation status based on compliance with Process Standards and Accreditation Policies.

ACCREDITED is assigned to a district that complies with Accreditation Policies and 100% of the Process Standards. (See exceptions in Appendices F and H.)

PROBATION is assigned to a district that fails to comply with ~~complies with fewer than~~ 100% of the Accreditation Policies and Process Standards. The district will be required to develop and implement a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with defined timelines to address the deficiencies. See Policy 2.8.

WITHDRAWN is assigned to a district that has previously been assigned a PROBATION status and has failed to comply with its CAP within the approved timelines. It may also be assigned to a district found in violation of any Process Standards contained in Policy 2.5.2. Any school district placed in ~~conservatorship~~ a District of Transformation may have its accreditation withdrawn. The district will be required to develop and implement a CAP with defined timelines to address the deficiencies. See Policy 2.8.

2.4 NOTIFICATION OF DEFICIENCIES AFTER ASSIGNMENT OF STATUS

After the annual assignment of a district's accreditation status in the fall, the process of determining statuses for the following school year begins. Whenever information on file with the MDE indicates that a school district may be in violation of a standard, the superintendent and the school board of the district are notified in writing by appropriate MDE staff responsible for monitoring compliance with the standard. School district officials are given ~~thirty (30) days~~ forty-five (45) calendar days from the date of receipt of notification to provide a written response verifying accuracy or inaccuracy of the notice of possible noncompliance with the standard.

If the written response includes appropriate sufficient evidence to correct or refute the alleged violation, the superintendent of the district is notified by appropriate MDE staff responsible for monitoring compliance with the standard. Any verified violation of a standard is reported in writing to the Office of Accreditation, where it is noted on the current Accreditation Record Summary of the district. ~~(See Glossary for definition of Accreditation Record Summary.)~~ The Office of Accreditation notifies the superintendent of the district in writing of the verified violation.

2.5 FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT AN IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN ACCREDITATION STATUS

An assigned accreditation status may remain unchanged during that school year except in those cases where verified noncompliance of accreditation standards may downgrade an accreditation status immediately, in accordance with Policy 2.5.1 or 2.5.2.

2.5.1 Recommended Accreditation Status – PROBATION

Districts in violation of any of the following standards may ~~will~~ be presented to the CSA for action, that may include downgrading the district's accreditation status to Probation:

- Accreditation Policy 2.1, reporting false information,
- Standard 1.1 and 1.3, failure to implement appropriate standards of governance,
- Standard 1.2, failure to comply with school board policies that meet state and federal statutes, rules, and regulations,
- Standards 4 and 5, failure to comply with financial accountability requirements,
- Standard 14, failure to comply with graduation requirements,
- Standard 16, failure to comply with test security procedures required by the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System,
- Standards 17.1-17.8, failure to comply with state/federal regulations,
- Standard 20, failure to comply with Instructional Practices, or
- Standards 29, 30, and 31, failure to comply with standards that sustain a safe school climate.

2.5.2 Recommended Accreditation Status – WITHDRAWN

Districts in violation of any of the following standards may ~~will~~ be presented to the CSA for action that may include withdrawal of the district's accreditation:

- Accreditation Policy 2.1, reporting false information,
- Standard 1.1 and 1.3, failure to implement appropriate standards of governance,
- Standard 1.2, failure to comply with school board policies that meet state and federal statutes, rules, and regulations,
- Standards 4 and 5, failure to comply with financial accountability requirements of a serious nature,
- Standard 14, failure to comply with graduation requirements specified in Standards 14.1, 14.2, and 14.5,
- Standard 16, failure to comply with test security procedures required by the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System in Appendix F, numbers 8 and 9,
- Standards 17.4-17.6, federal programs whose regulations call for strong sanctions for continued patterns of noncompliance,
- Standard 20, failure to comply with Instructional Practices, or
- Standards 29, 30, and 31, failure to comply with standards that pose life-threatening conditions for students and staff.

2.6 RESOLVING ACCREDITATION CONTROVERSIES

All controversies involving the accreditation statuses of school districts are initially heard by a duly authorized representative of the CSA in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-5, and Policy 6.0, unless a recommendation is made regarding a State of Emergency under Miss. Code Ann. §37-17-6(12)(b). See Policy 2.9.

2.7 CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS OR RECONFIGURATIONS OF SCHOOLS ~~TRANSFER OF GRADES~~

2.7.1 When two (2) or more school districts consolidate, the affected school district(s) may, depending on the nature and applicability, have any current citations applied to the consolidated district until the consolidated district has provided evidence of compliance of the violation and the Office of Accreditation has verified compliance.

2.7.2 When a local school board approves the reconfiguration of a school within the same district the school district may be allowed to maintain its accreditation status.

See Section 20 of the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for additional explanation of how performance classifications (grades) are assigned to reconfigured schools/districts.

~~When two (2) or more school districts consolidate or when two (2) or more school boards approve the transfer of a grade or grades, the affected school district(s) may be allowed to maintain its accreditation status for a period of time to be determined upon application to the CSA. The CSA shall review the application of any such affected school district(s) and submit a recommendation to the SBE for approval.~~

2.8 CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN (CAP) AND WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION

2.8.1 Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with Definitive Timelines

When a school district has been assigned a PROBATION or WITHDRAWN accreditation status, the school district ~~with assistance from the MDE~~ shall develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with defined timelines in which to correct the district's deficiencies. ~~The SBE implements the program of development in each district assigned a PROBATION or WITHDRAWN status in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(11).~~

The school district is required to submit a CAP within sixty (60) calendar days of notification. The plan shall stipulate what will be done to remove the deficiencies and the timeline required in accordance with Miss. Code Ann § 37-17-6(11)(b). The plan shall be approved by the local school board as documented by official minutes and bear the signatures of the school board chairperson/president and district superintendent. The SBE has final approval on the CAP and the timelines. When corrective action has been implemented to remove a citation, the school district shall submit documentary evidence confirming such to the Office of Accreditation. Assigned MDE staff may conduct follow-up visits as necessary to verify corrective action and compliance.

2.8.2 Withdrawal of Accreditation

~~If the district's deficiencies are not removed~~ district fails to correct the deficiencies during the time specified in the CAP, the school district may have its accreditation withdrawn by the CSA in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a). The status of the district will be listed as WITHDRAWN NOT ACCREDITED, and the record of that district will continue to be maintained.

2.8.2.1 Hearings

Before requesting approval from the SBE to withdraw the accredited status of a district, the CSA shall conduct a hearing ~~(See Policy 2.9 for exception)~~ to allow the officials of the affected district to present evidence or other reasons why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a) and Policy 6.0.

2.8.2.2 Results of Hearings

Upon consideration of the transcribed record and recommendation of the CSA's representative, the CSA shall meet, make a decision and notify all parties in writing by certified mail. Within forty-five (45) calendar days of the conclusion of the hearing and after consideration of the results of the hearing, the CSA shall be authorized, with the approval of the SBE, to withdraw the accreditation of the district and may issue a request to the Governor that a state of emergency be declared in that district in accordance

with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a). If the decision is made not to withdraw the accredited status of the district, a new timeline is established in the district's Corrective Action Plan (CAP).

2.8.2.3 Public Notice

~~After~~ If a state of emergency has been declared, the CSA files a public notice at least once a week for at least three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper published within the immediate or general vicinity of the affected school district in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(13).

2.8.2.4 Access to School District Records

School districts are required to produce necessary reports, correspondence, financial statements, and any other documents necessary for the CSA to implement this section on withdrawal of accreditation and conservatorship District of Transformation.

2.8.2.5 Reinstatement of an Accredited Status

Based on the recommendation from the Office of Accreditation or the State Superintendent of Public Education, the superintendent and school board chairperson/president of a school district whose accreditation has been withdrawn may file a petition with the CSA on School Accreditation for reinstatement of accreditation to be effective on January 1 or July 1. The CSA shall require all school districts that petition for reinstatement of accreditation to appear before the CSA to furnish evidence satisfactory to the CSA that the school district is compliant with all accreditation standards prior to the reinstatement of accreditation.

2.9

CONDITIONS OF EMERGENCY STATUS AND WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION

2.9.1 Declaration of State of Emergency

The SBE may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency in any school district ~~when any of the following emergency situations occur~~ in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6. Upon the declaration of the state of emergency by the Governor, the SBE may take all such action for dealing with the school districts as authorized under Miss. Code Ann. § (12) or (15), including the withdrawal of the district's accreditation.

2.9.2. State of Emergency Hearing Procedures

Pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12), there are several avenues for the SBE to make a request to the Governor to declare a state of emergency.

2.9.2.1 Withdrawal of Accreditation Hearing and Subsequent State of Emergency

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(a), the CSA shall conduct a hearing to determine whether a school district's accreditation should be withdrawn based on failure to comply with their CAP or violations of accreditation standards that may require immediate action. Based on the CSA's consideration, if the CSA, with the approval of the SBE, withdraws the accreditation of a school district, the SBE shall be authorized to request to the Governor that a state of emergency be declared in the district. See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-5, Policy 2.8.2, and Policy 6.0 for hearing procedure.

2.9.2.2 Extreme Emergency Situation Hearing

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b), the MDE's Office of Accreditation shall present evidence to the CSA to support the existence of an extreme emergency situation in the school district that jeopardizes the safety, security, and educational interests of the children and the belief that the emergency situation is related to a serious violation or violations of accreditation standards or state or federal law or failure to meet academic standards as evidenced by a continued pattern of poor student performance. This presentation shall not exceed forty (40) minutes.

Following the MDE's Office of Accreditation's presentation, district representative(s) which shall include, the superintendent and school board chairperson/president, will address the CSA. While the district may have legal representation, **only** district employees and/or school board members may address the CSA during the forty (40) minutes allowed for the district to present evidence pertinent to this matter.

Following the presentations, the CSA will be allowed to address MDE staff and local district representatives to ask any clarifying questions.

Once all questions have been asked by the CSA, the attorney for the district (if applicable), and the attorney for the MDE, will be allowed ten (10) minutes each to provide closing arguments.

Based on the evidence presented, the CSA acts in one of the following manners:

- Accepts the recommendation of MDE and determines that an extreme emergency exists. The CSA submits the resolution to the State Superintendent of Public Education and the State Board of Education; or
- Rejects the recommendation of MDE.

In accordance with the resolution from the CSA that an extreme emergency exists, the SBE meets to:

- Accept the CSA's determination that an extreme emergency exists, and requests the Governor to declare a state of emergency; or
- Reject the CSA's determination that an extreme emergency exists.

Any request made to the Governor, shall contain an expiration date, which automatically rescinds the request to the Governor if the Governor fails to declare a state of emergency after a specified time period. This expiration date shall be set by the SBE.

2.9.2.3 Failing District

The MDE Office of Accreditation may present evidence to the SBE that the school district meets the SBE's definition of a failing school district ("F" designation) for two (2) consecutive years. No prior action by the CSA is necessary.

The SBE may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency in that school district.

2.9.2.4 More than 50% of the schools are Schools At-Risk

The MDE Office of Accreditation may present evidence to the SBE that more than 50% of the schools within the school district are "schools at-risk" (i.e., failing schools identified as "F") in any one (1) year. No prior action by the CSA is necessary.

The SBE may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency in that school district.

2.9.3 Achievement School District

In the alternative, the SBE may consider a school district for inclusion in the Achievement School District (ASD), in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-17 if it meets the definition of Failing District or more than 50% of the schools are Schools At Risk, as found in Policy 2.9.2.3 and 2.9.2.4, and meets the following criteria established by the State Board of Education:

- The Mississippi Achievement School District shall only take over the number of districts for which it has the capacity to serve; and

- District must have been identified as an “F” district for two (2) consecutive years or two (2) of three (3) consecutive years; and
- 50% or more of the schools are rated as an “F” school; and/or
- 50% or more of the students in the district are in an “F” school.

~~2.9.2~~ 2.9.4 Penalty for the Withdrawal of Accreditation

Policy ~~2.9.2~~ will become 2.9.3 is effective one (1) calendar year following the Withdrawal of Accreditation by the CSA and the SBE.

The withdrawal of a school district’s accreditation by the CSA will result in the following:

- A school or schools within a district shall be limited to participation in no more than fifty percent (50%) of the regular season of any interscholastic activity, which shall include division/district/regional games,
- The interscholastic season schedule for a school or schools within a district shall not include the opening day of season or any type of post season participation, as determined by the Office of Accreditation, and
- Cheerleading, drill and dance squads, speech and debate, choral music, and band may participate in district or state contest, but shall not be eligible to receive ratings.

All schedule requests shall be submitted in writing to the MDE’s Office of Accreditation, at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the season. The Office of Accreditation shall pre-approve all schedules and participation in interscholastic activities. In addition to the suspension of all post season activities, the school district shall not be allowed to participate in jamborees, special games, parades, tournaments, holiday tournaments, or competitions of any nature.

Failure to comply with section ~~2.9.2~~ 2.9.3 will result in the suspension of ALL interscholastic activities.

Failure of a district to have its accreditation reinstated by the CSA after a period of two (2) calendar years from the date of the withdrawal of accreditation shall result in the immediate suspension of ALL interscholastic activities until the district’s accreditation status is reinstated.

Note: Interscholastic activities include, but are not limited to, football, basketball, baseball, track and field, cross country, tennis, golf, volleyball, softball (fast pitch and slow pitch), soccer, wrestling, swimming, power lifting, bowling, archery, cheerleading, drill, and dance squads, speech and debate, choral music, and band.

3.0 PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATION POLICY

The SBE, acting through the CSA, is required to establish and implement a process for accountability at the individual public school level and district level in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6. Individual schools and districts are held accountable for: 1) student achievement proficiency, 2) student growth, 3) graduation, 4) acceleration, 5) college- and career- readiness, and 6) participation, if applicable, and receive an annual School Performance Classification and District Performance Classification.

When the district establishes a new school and/or the district reconfigures the specific grades or students assigned to an existing school(s) within the district, the student achievement proficiency data used to assign school performance classifications will follow the guidelines established in the School Performance Standards and School Performance Model—the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

3.1 ASSIGNMENT OF PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATIONS

3.1.1 School Performance Classification

Information concerning school performance is reported to the CSA on an annual basis, and performance classifications are assigned in the fall of each school year. In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(5), each public school will be assigned an annual performance classification. In addition, the graduation rate will be included in determining the performance classification of schools with a Grade 12. ~~An alternative school will not be assigned a school performance classification. See Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 7.1 and 7.2, State Board Policy Chapter 7, Rules 7.1 and 7.2 and the Glossary for definition of alternative school. Note: Refer to the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for exceptions.~~

3.1.2 District Performance Classification

Information concerning district performance is reported to the CSA on an annual basis, and performance classifications are assigned in the fall of each school year. Each public school district will be assigned an annual performance classification based on ~~achievement~~ proficiency, growth, graduation rate, acceleration, college- and career- readiness, and participation. A district performance level is assigned based on the performance of all students in the district [i.e., the district will be treated as one (1) K-12 school].

3.1.3 Internal Review of Preliminary Accountability Results

If the school district has reason to believe the preliminary results of the statewide accountability system applied to a district or school are incorrect due to a calculation or data error, ~~or other substantive reason,~~ the school district may submit written evidence to the Office of District and School Performance, to support the position of the school district. All requests for review shall be submitted in writing based on the timeline published each year by the Office of District and School Performance. Any requests not submitted based upon the published timeline shall not be considered after the deadline for submission.

The Office of District and School Performance will review these requests and present them to an Internal Review Committee for consideration. The Internal Review Committee will consist of, at a minimum, four (4) MDE staff, and one (1) external chairperson.

The Office of District and School Performance shall present the decision(s) of the Internal Review Committee to the CSA for consideration.

3.1.4 Review or Appeal of Final Accountability Results

If the school district disagrees with the decision of the SBE, the school district may ~~must~~ submit written evidence to appeal the final results of the statewide accountability system approved by the SBE. Only appeals based on results believed to be incorrect due to a calculation or data error, shall be considered. The appeal shall be submitted to the ~~Offices of Accreditation and District and School Performance~~ Executive Secretary of the SBE within ten (10) calendar days of the SBE's approval. Only school districts that have contested preliminary results may seek an appeal of the decision of the SBE. Any school districts that have not contested preliminary results will have waived their rights to appeal the final results of the statewide accountability system.

For those applicable appeals to the final results, the same process shall be followed as a request for review (i.e., Internal Review Committee, CSA, and SBE); however, during the appeal of the final results, school districts will receive notification of the Internal Review Committee's decision prior to presentation to the CSA. The district superintendent may request to address the CSA regarding the appeal of the results. The district superintendent shall be allotted thirty (30) minutes to address the CSA. The MDE shall also be allotted thirty (30) minutes to address the CSA. The CSA may ask questions

of either the District or the MDE following their presentation. The CSA shall not consider any new factual evidence, not previously provided to the Internal Review Committee. The CSA will make a recommendation to the SBE for approval. At the SBE meeting, the district superintendent shall be allotted ten (10) minutes to address the SBE. The MDE shall also be allotted ten (10) minutes to address the SBE. The SBE may question either the district superintendent or the MDE following their presentation. The SBE shall not consider any new factual evidence. The SBE may either affirm or deny a school district's appeal. The SBE makes the final determination of the appeal's disposition.

3.2 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance (output standards) address selected components of the statewide assessment program and other outcome measures related to the performance of a school and/or district. The SBE also considers factors such as proficiency and growth, graduation rates, dropout rates, ~~completion rates~~, college- and career-readiness, acceleration, participation, and any other factors the SBE deems appropriate.

3.3 PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATIONS

The performance classification assigned to a school or district will be determined by performance indicators as defined in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System. These indicators are scored and combined to assign performance classifications of **A, B, C, D, and F**. See Performance Standards.

A school ~~will~~ may not receive a school performance classification if the test data have been invalidated, and the school performance classification will be noted as Test Data Invalidated. (See Section 18 of the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for exceptions.) See Appendix F.

3.4 SCHOOLS AT-RISK

Following an analysis of school data each year, the MDE shall identify those schools that are deficient in educating students and need improvement in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-18-3 and 37-18-5. This analysis shall indicate individual school performance ~~in two (2) areas: (a) meeting its assigned yearly growth expectation and (b) percentage of the students in the school that are proficient~~ based on the annual performance classifications (grades).

3.4.1 Designation

A school shall be identified as a School At-Risk and in need of assistance if the school ~~Does not meet its growth expectation and has a percentage of students functioning below grade level or is identified as an F School as designated by the SBE.~~ is designated as an F as identified by the SBE. A school that is failing and that is identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Target Support and Improvement (TSI), or Additional Target Support and Improvement (ATSI), as outlined in the Mississippi Consolidated State Plan (Mississippi Succeeds), shall be recognized as a School At-Risk.

3.4.1.1 Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Identification

- **METHOD 1:** graduation rate less than or equal to 67% (identification in 2018-19 based on 2017-18 data; subsequent identification every 3rd year); or
- **METHOD 2:** bottom 5% of Title I A schools (identification in 2018-19 based on 2017-18 data; subsequent identification every 3rd year)
- **METHOD 3:** previously identified Additional Targeted Support and Improvement school with 3 consecutive years of subgroup proficiency performance (ELA or math) at or below that of all students in the bottom 5% of Title I A schools (identification for this group to begin in 2021-22)

3.4.1.2 Target Support and Improvement (TSI) Identification

- Subgroup in the lowest 50% of overall accountability index; and
- Subgroup in lowest quartile of 3-year average gap-to-goal; and
- Subgroup scores in lowest quartile of 3-year improvement toward gap-to-goal closure; then
- Schools with a subgroup meeting all three (3) of the above criteria will be rank-ordered annually, using overall accountability index, and the bottom 5% of all schools not identified for CSI will be identified for TSI.

3.4.1.3 Additional Target Support and Improvement (ATSI) Identification

For all schools, 3-year average subgroup performance is at or below that of all students in the lowest performing schools (bottom 5% of Title I A schools) (for example: identification in 2018-2019 based on 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 data; subsequent annual identification based on most recent 3-year data trend).

3.4.2— Notification

Within fifteen (15) days after a School At Risk has been identified, written notice shall be sent by the SBE by certified mail to the school principal, and the local board of education.

3.4.3— Evaluation Teams and Evaluation Report

~~Within fifteen (15) days after notification, the SBE shall assign an evaluation team to the school, subject to the availability of funding. The evaluation team shall be independent of the school being evaluated and may include employees of the State Department of Education. The team may include retired educators who have met certain standards and have completed all necessary training.~~

~~The evaluation team shall analyze the School At Risk's data to determine probable areas of weakness before conducting an on-site audit. After completing the evaluation of the School At Risk, the team shall prepare and adopt its school evaluation report, which shall be submitted to the State Superintendent of Education for approval within ninety (90) calendar days. The evaluation report shall identify any personnel who were found by the evaluation team to be in need of improvement and need to participate in a professional development plan.~~

~~Following the State Superintendent's approval of the report, a representative of the State Superintendent and the evaluation team leader shall present the report to the principal of the School At Risk, the school district superintendent, and school board members of the local school district. Following this presentation, the evaluation report shall be presented to the community served by the School At Risk at an advertised public meeting.~~

3.4.4— School Improvement Plan

~~Based on the findings of the evaluation report and the results of the public meeting, the MDE and evaluation team leader shall assist the school principal and other local school officials in the development of a school improvement action plan.~~

~~The school improvement action plan shall be developed and approved by the principal of the School At Risk, the superintendent of the local school district, the local school board, and a majority of the teachers of the school. If the plan is not approved, the SBE may approve and implement the plan in the school.~~

~~The State Department of Education shall provide technical assistance and shall assist in identifying funding to the School At Risk in the implementation of the school improvement action plan, including the implementation of any recommended professional development plan, and the department may contract with the Institutions of Higher Learning to provide such technical assistance. The assistance~~

team shall collaborate with school and school district employees in the implementation and monitoring of the school improvement action plan and the State Department of Education shall ensure that a report is issued monthly to the local school board and the local community-based advisory council.

~~A school district that has been designated as an F as defined by the SBE or a district and/or a school designated below a C, shall establish a community-based pre-kindergarten through higher education (P-16) council comprised of a broad spectrum of the community, including economic developers, elected officials, civic leaders, business leaders, faith-based leaders, social services, nonprofit organizations, school attendance officers, law enforcement officials, health department officials, day care providers, librarians, parents, and others with the knowledge and resources that can be leveraged to build strong communities. The SBE shall develop procedures for appointments to the council, which shall not be appointed solely by the school board. The council will serve as a community-led group that is inclusive, accountable, and required to publicly report progress to the community as a whole.~~

3.4.5 — Professional Development Plan for Educators

~~As part of the school improvement action plan for a School At-Risk, a professional development plan shall be prepared for those school administrators, teachers, or other employees who are identified by the evaluation team as needing improvement.~~

3.4.2 Notification

Within fifteen (15) days after a School At-Risk has been identified, written notice shall be sent by the MDE, on behalf of the SBE, by e-mail and mail to the school principal, local superintendent, and the local board of education.

For All Schools At-Risk and CSI schools, the district shall create a team, consisting of the superintendent, a board member, the principal, specified district level staff, a content area teacher, and a parent or community member representative from the identified school, to participate in a cross-agency interview with MDE personnel to address the school's performance. The school team shall lead a presentation from a template provided by the MDE, addressing topics, including but not limited to, leading and lagging data, equitable access, leadership, instructional transformation, talent development, and culture shift. Following the interview, the superintendent shall receive verbal and written feedback on the presentation prepared by the interview team and shall utilize this feedback to inform decision-making and plan for school improvement.

3.4.3 Plan of Improvement

The school shall complete a plan for improvement, which shall be approved by the local board of education as documented by official minutes and bear the signatures of the school board chairperson/president and district superintendent. The MDE shall provide final approval for school improvement plans of schools with a CSI designation. The MDE will monitor the plan implementation of failing schools that are identified as CSI. The local school district shall monitor the plan implementation of Schools At-Risk that are not identified as CSI.

The principal or designee shall provide an update addressing progress toward the plan's action steps each month to the community during the monthly local school board meetings. The update and a copy of the school board meeting agenda shall be submitted to the MDE. The school will continue to implement the approved plan until the release of the accountability performance ratings in the subsequent year.

4.0 RECOGNITION AND REWARDS EXEMPTIONS

The SBE shall provide special recognition and/or rewards to individual schools or school districts meeting the highest level of accreditation standards performance as defined as a school or district with a performance classification of an "A." or a "B" in the top two (2) ranges classifications will be identified as meeting the highest level of accreditation standards.

The SBE may provide certain exemptions to individual schools or school districts assigned the performance classifications of an "A" or "B."

4.1 RECOGNITION

Special recognition shall be provided to all schools meeting the highest level of accreditation standards performance. Examples of recognition include, but are not limited to, public and/or media announcements and events.

- ~~Special recognition of student progress and effort;~~
 - ~~Certificates of recognition and plaques for teachers, principals, superintendents, support and classified personnel, and parents; and~~
 - ~~Media announcements utilizing the services of the Mississippi Educational Television.~~
-

4.2 REWARDSEXEMPTIONS

4.2.1 Exemptions for Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance Assigned a Performance Classification of "A" or "B"

Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance assigned a performance classification of "A" or "B" may be exempt from citations of noncompliance with the Process Standards listed below:

- Library Media/Organized Collection (Standard 18.1)
- Library Media Program of Service (Standard 18.2)
- Limit on Course Preparations (Standard 25)
- Student Teacher Ratios in Grades 1-4 (Standard 28.2)
- Limit of 150 Students Per Teacher in Academic Core Subjects (Standard 28.5)

4.2.2 Exemptions for Districts Assigned a Performance Classification of "A" or "B" Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance

School districts assigned the Highest Levels of Performance a performance classification of "A" or "B" may be exempt from citations of noncompliance with the Process Standards listed below:

- Community Involvement, Parental Communication, and Business Partnerships (Standard 12)
- Senior Preparation for Graduation Ceremonies (Standard 13.4)
- Summer School Program Requirements (Standard 13.5)
- Professional Development Plan/Program (Standard 15)
- Early Childhood Programs (kindergarten and teacher assistant) (Standard 17.1)
- Instructional Management System (Standard 20)
- Suggested Teaching Strategies, Resources, and Assessment Strategies (Standard 20)

4.2.3 Financial Rewards

See Miss. Code Ann. § 37-19-10 for information regarding the School Recognition Program.

If funds are appropriated by the legislature, Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance may apply to the SBE for monetary incentives to be used for selected school needs, as identified by a vote of all licensed and instructional personnel employed at the school. These incentive funds may be used for specific needs, including, but not limited to the following:

Funding for professional development activities; staff participating in such activities will report to the school and school district about the benefits and lessons learned from such training;

Technology needs;
Sabbaticals for teachers or administrators, or both, to pursue additional professional development or educational enrichment;
Paid professional leave; and
Training for parents, including, but not limited to, curriculum, Title I, special need students, student rights and responsibility, school and community relations, and effective parenting.

5.0 ACCREDITATION MONITORING PROCEDURES

The MDE continuously monitors school districts to verify compliance with applicable accreditation requirements and state and federal laws.

5.1 ON-SITE EVALUATIONS

The SBE, the State Superintendent of Public Education, or the CSA has the authority to call for an on-site evaluation or investigation of a school district at any time. If deficiencies are found in meeting accreditation standards or state and/or federal laws, the district superintendent shall be notified in writing and given ~~thirty (30) days~~ forty-five (45) calendar days from the receipt of notification to provide a written response. The report of findings is filed in the current accreditation records in the Office of Accreditation.

5.2 INVESTIGATIVE EVALUATIONS AUDITS (COMPLAINTS AGAINST DISTRICTS)

All formal complaints made against schools or districts must be submitted to the Office of Accreditation in writing and ~~bear the~~ include the ~~handwritten signature~~ name and contact information (valid phone number or valid e-mail 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.

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

If the complaint addresses an area over which the CSA has no authority, receipt of the complaint is acknowledged with instructions of where to direct the complaint, ~~the individual filing the complaint is acknowledged~~ 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, and 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 Mississippi Ethics Commission also has authority to enforce the provisions of the Open Meetings Act and issue civil penalties for violations.

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 ~~thirty (30) days~~ 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.

5.2.3 Unannounced On-Site Investigative Evaluations Audits

The SBE, the State Superintendent of Public Education, or the CSA has the authority to call for an on-site investigation of a school district at any time. Procedures for conducting investigative audits are as follows:

5.2.3.1 The auditor(s) may arrive in the district without prior notification. The number of auditors involved will depend on the nature and seriousness of the allegations.

5.2.3.2 The auditor(s) inform the district superintendent of the purpose of the audit and of the procedures to be followed. The auditor(s) will provide the district superintendent with a letter of notice from the State Superintendent of Public Education.

~~5.2.3.3 The auditor(s) discuss procedures with the principal of the school if appropriate~~

~~5.2.3.4~~ 5.2.3.3 The auditor(s) may use various methods to collect the data needed to verify or discredit the complaint, including, but not limited to, examination of official records, anonymous surveys, interviews with school personnel, and observations.

5.2.3.4 The auditor(s) may attend all regularly scheduled and special-called board meetings of the district. The district superintendent and board chair shall notify the auditor(s) in advance of the date and time of all regularly scheduled and special-called board meetings.

~~5.2.3.5 Upon completion of the audit, the auditor(s) compile a written report that is sent to the superintendent and the chairman of the school board.~~ Near the completion of the on-site investigation, the auditor(s) will schedule a time to meet with the superintendent and school board chair to conduct an exit conference.

5.2.3.6 Upon completion of the investigation, the auditor(s) compile a written report in accordance with Policy 5.8 that shall be provided to the district superintendent and the chairman of the school board, and depending on the recommendation of the MDE, may be addressed with the CSA.

5.3 SPECIAL TEST AUDITS

Reports regarding potential testing irregularities or test security violations are referred to the Office of Student Assessment. Such reports shall include, but are not limited to, statistical analyses of test data conducted after each test administration, self-reported incidents, third-party allegations regarding violations of testing requirements, and irregularities noted during test security audits. Regular test security audits may be conducted prior to, during, and following each test administration to promote the integrity and security of the Mississippi Assessment System. The Office of Student Assessment will report to the Office of Accreditation each testing irregularity that has been verified as a violation of a testing requirement.

5.3.1 Self-reports or third-party allegations regarding testing irregularities may be either formal written reports (signed or unsigned) or verbal reports or complaints that may be made officially or anonymously and with or without documentary evidence.

5.3.2 If a third-party allegation addresses an area over which the SBE has no authority, the individual filing the allegation will be notified.

5.3.3 A self-report or allegation shall identify specific details concerning alleged violations of test security and/or testing irregularities to warrant an investigative audit.

5.3.4 Any statistical analysis that indicates a potential testing irregularity or test security violation will be reviewed and evaluated by staff in the Office of Student Assessment. If the review and evaluation of the statistical analysis indicate that further information is required to resolve or confirm the testing irregularity, the Office of Student Assessment may require that a school district investigate the potential irregularity and report its findings to the Office of Student Assessment. Any verified testing irregularity is reported to the Office of Accreditation for appropriate action.

5.3.5 Procedures for test security audits are as follows:

5.3.5.1 The auditor may arrive at the school without prior notification.

5.3.5.2 The auditor informs the school administrator of the purpose of the audit and of the procedures to be followed.

5.3.5.3 The auditor requests that the district superintendent be notified that a test audit is in progress.

5.3.5.4 The auditor uses the same methods to collect data as described in ~~policy~~ Appendix F.

5.3.5.5 The auditor reports the audit findings to the Office of Student Assessment. If the audit findings indicate that a testing irregularity has occurred, the Office of Student Assessment will notify the district superintendent. If the response from the district superintendent does not resolve the irregularity, the irregularity is reported to the Office of Accreditation for appropriate action.

5.4 SUMMER PROGRAM AUDITS

Each school district providing educational programs during the summer is required to report summer program data, including types of instructional programs provided, staffing, and enrollment. School districts offering summer programs may be audited to verify information contained in the annual Summer School/Extended Year Report.

5.5 UNANNOUNCED AUDITS

Unannounced audits are conducted by MDE staff or MDE-trained auditors under contract with the MDE. A limited number of accreditation standards are audited, and depending on the size of the district, this audit may include only a sample review of schools.

5.6 OTHER STATE/FEDERAL PROGRAM AUDITS/EVALUATIONS

When audits or evaluations of other state or federal programs reveal verified noncompliance with state or federal program regulations, the areas of noncompliance are filed with the Office of Accreditation and placed on the district's Accreditation Record Summary.

5.7 ANALYSIS AND VERIFICATION OF ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

Accreditation staff in the MDE review annual personnel/accreditation information and other annual reports submitted by school districts. Staff will analyze and compare this information with any other accreditation data on record and notify responsible officials of any inconsistency in reporting or any apparent deficiency in meeting standards. Any information submitted by a school district may be verified through on-site visits. Upon request, the school district shall provide documentation necessary to validate compliance with accreditation requirements.

5.8 COMPILATION OF THE AUDIT REPORT

Procedures followed when reporting, interpreting, and responding to on-site audit findings are outlined in Policy 5.8.

5.8.1 A report of the on-site audit findings, including corrective actions with timelines, is compiled within forty-five (45) calendar days from the close of the audit. If additional time is needed for the compilation of the report, MDE will provide written notice of this timeline. The report, along with a cover letter stating the process standard(s) that the district failed to comply with will be mailed, e-mailed, or hand-delivered to the district. The cover letter will also provide MDE's recommendation to the CSA. Copies of the report shall be provided to the superintendent and the school board chair/president, and the CSA/SBE, if applicable.

5.8.2 If the MDE does not recommend any action (i.e., Probation, Withdrawal of Accreditation, or State of Emergency) be taken, the district shall respond to the site visit findings. The superintendent is given forty-five (45) calendar days from the day of receipt of the report, to respond in writing to any deficiency cited. The date the district's response is due in the Office of Accreditation is indicated in the report cover letter.

5.8.3 If the MDE's recommendation to the CSA is to downgrade the district's accreditation status to Probation, the MDE shall inform the superintendent and the school board of the district in writing that the district's accreditation status may be downgraded in accordance with Policy 2.5.1. Upon receipt of the notification from the MDE, the school board of a school district may request a hearing in accordance with Policy 6.0.

5.8.4 If the MDE's recommendation to the CSA is to withdraw the district's Accreditation, the MDE shall inform the superintendent and the school board of the district in writing that the district's accreditation status may be withdrawn in accordance with Policy 2.5.2. and Policy 6.0. The MDE's recommendation is only related to the withdrawal of the district's Accreditation status and not related to declaring a state of emergency.

5.8.5 If the MDE's recommendation to the CSA is to determine whether a state of emergency exists, then the MDE will follow the procedure prescribed in Policy 2.9.2.

6.0 HEARING AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

All controversies involving the accreditation of schools or school districts are initially heard by a duly authorized representative of the CSA before whom a complete record is made in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-5, unless a recommendation is being made to declare a state of emergency under Miss. Code Ann §37-17-6 (12)(b). See Policy. 2.9.2. This does not apply to appeals of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

6.1 REQUEST FOR HEARING

The school board of a school district may request a hearing by filing written notice with the executive secretary of the CSA within ten (10) calendar days of the written notification of the recommended CSA action.

6.2 AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMISSION

Upon receipt of the written request for hearing from the school board, the chairman of the CSA assigns, in writing, a duly authorized representative previously appointed by the CSA to hear the controversy.

6.3 HEARING PROCEDURES

6.3.1 The CSA's representative sets the time, place, and date for a hearing and notifies all parties of the time, place, and date of the hearing by certified mail, return receipt requested. All parties may be represented by counsel at the expense of the party. The hearing is conducted in such a manner as to afford all parties a fair and reasonable opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence pertinent to the issues and to cross-examine witnesses presented by the opposing party. The CSA's representative may permit any portion of the evidence to be submitted in the form of depositions or affidavits; and in case affidavits are received, an opportunity to present counter-affidavits is provided.

6.3.2 It is the responsibility of each party at the hearing to secure the attendance of such witness or witnesses as the party deems necessary or appropriate, and any expense connected with the attendance of such witnesses is borne by the party responsible for the attendance of the witness.

6.3.3 At least fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the hearing, parties represented by counsel and/or producing witnesses will provide a list containing the name, address, and telephone number of counsel and/or witnesses, and copies of all exhibits that will be produced at the hearing, to the other party or parties, and to the CSA.

~~6.3.3~~ **6.3.4** In conducting the hearing, the CSA's representative is not bound by common law or by statutory rules of evidence or by technical or formal rules of procedure, provided, however, hearsay evidence, if admitted, is not the sole basis for the determination of facts by the CSA's representative.

~~6.3.4~~ **6.3.5** After presentation by the executive secretary of the CSA the MDE regarding recommended action and policy in support thereof, the party filing the written notice of hearing has the burden of going forward with the evidence, and at the conclusion of the hearing, the CSA's representative grants any party the opportunity to present a statement in such party's own behalf, either in person or by such party's attorney.

~~6.3.5~~ **6.3.6** All hearings held before the CSA's representative are recorded and transcribed by a court reporter whose fees and costs of transcription are paid by the school district involved within

forty-five (45) calendar days after having been notified of such costs and fees by the CSA. Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the transcribed record of the hearing, the CSA's representative files a written recommendation to the CSA as to the resolution of the controversies. Upon consideration of the transcribed record and recommendation of its representative, the CSA shall meet, make its decision and notifies all parties in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the CSA is final unless the school board of the school district involved elects to appeal to the SBE. ~~The school board of the school district may appeal to the SBE by filing a written notice of appeal with the State Superintendent of Education within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the decision of the CSA.~~

6.4 APPEAL PROCEDURES

6.4.1 The school board of the school district may appeal to the SBE by filing a written notice of appeal with the State Superintendent of Public Education within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the decision of the CSA.

6.4.2 The notice of appeal should state with particularity the matters which, in the opinion of the school district, have been overlooked or mistakenly conceived in the decision of the CSA. An appeal to the SBE is on the record previously made before the CSA's representative and the CSA and is not intended as an opportunity for rearguing the entire case. No new factual evidence will be considered.

~~6.4.2~~ **6.4.3** Upon receipt of the transcript, the SBE, through the State Superintendent of Public Education, notifies the parties involved that the transcript has been filed and that the appealing party has fifteen (15) calendar days to file any written argument not to exceed twenty-five (25) pages. The CSA is allowed ~~thirty (30)~~ fifteen (15) calendar days from the filing of the appealing party's filed written argument ~~transcript with the SBE~~ to file a responsive written argument not to exceed twenty-five (25) pages. Any written argument in rebuttal by the appealing party must be filed within ~~forty (40)~~ ten (10) calendar days of the filing of the ~~transcript~~ CSA's response. The appealing party may not exceed ~~twenty five (25)~~ ten (10) pages in its rebuttal. An original and nine (9) copies of the written arguments shall be provided. The SBE considers all appeals within thirty (30) calendar days of the last written argument filed. There will be no oral argument before the SBE. The written decision of the SBE is transmitted to the parties involved within fifteen (15) calendar days of its decision.

6.4.4 School districts that appeal a final decision of the SBE shall be on the record and shall be filed in accordance with state law and local rules of procedure.

7.0 ANNUAL REPORT

By November 1 of each year, each local school district shall be required to develop and publish an annual report as prescribed by the SBE. The report shall be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the county and posted on the school district's web site in a printable format. The public notice shall include information on the report's availability on the district's web site, with the web site address, and the location(s) in the school district where a copy of the report can be obtained. Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-53 (1) (c), Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 18.1, State Board Policy Chapter 18, Rule 18.1.