

OFFICE OF CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
November 20, 2025

OFFICE OF DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

04. Action: Approval of A-F performance level cuts for schools and districts as established in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System, effective with the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §37-17-6(5) [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan]

Background Information: The MDE in consultation with the Accountability Task Force (ATF) and a Standard Setting Committee is recommending changes to the A-F performance level cuts for schools and districts as established in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System to be effective with the 2025-2026 school year. The Commission on School Accreditation met to consider the recommended performance level cuts on November 18, 2025 and voted unanimously to approve the recommended changes.

This item references Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the *Mississippi Board of Education Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Approval

Backup material attached



To: Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

From: Chris Domaleski and Laura Pinsonneault, The Center for Assessment

Date: October 20, 2025

Re: Mississippi Accountability Standard Setting Recommendations

The purpose of this memo is to document the process and recommendations from the accountability standard setting meetings facilitated by the Center for Assessment between September and October of 2025. The memo provides background information, a summary of the standard setting process, and the recommended cut scores for 700-point and 1000-point schools and districts with preliminary impact data.

Background

Mississippi statute requires that standards for student, school, and district performance to increase when proficiency rates exceed 75% or when 65% of schools or districts earn a grade of “B” or higher. This criterion was reached in 2023, prompting the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to engage in a process for resetting accountability standards. The MDE worked closely with its technical advisors and the Accountability Task Force to develop and refine the methods and plans.

Given the central importance of school accountability in Mississippi, it is appropriate to require compelling evidence that each letter grade rating has a high degree of validity for the intended interpretation and uses. A substantial part of that validity argument is the design and implementation of a sound process for establishing standards that credibly reflect the state’s vision for the accountability system. Such a process 1) is based on established research and methods; 2) involves judgements from qualified experts, leaders, and policymakers; and 3) is well documented and open to broad review.

Moreover, the MDE prioritized an approach to standard setting that includes both norm and criterion referenced information. Norm referencing refers to using impact data, such as the percent of schools projected to be classified at each letter grade, to influence decisions. Criterion referencing, by contrast, refers to establishing fixed, descriptive definitions of school performance.

Accountability Standard Setting Process

Panelists

The MDE empaneled a group of education constituents that included district staff, members of the Mississippi House of Representatives and Senate, legislative and gubernatorial staff, policy



organization staff, and members from the Commission on School Accreditation and the State Board of Education. The list of panelists is provided as Appendix A.

Panelists engaged in a two-part standard setting process that involved 1) describing performance and 2) recommending cut scores.

Describing Performance: September 9, 2025

Panelists were convened to review and discuss draft performance level descriptors (PLDs) that characterize performance at each of the accountability rating levels, from A to F. This process is critical to produce PLDs for panelists to use in the standard setting workshop when recommending performance cut scores.

Panelists documented their individual recommendations about the PLDs overall and provided input to inform understanding of descriptive words used in and across the performance level descriptors (i.e., helping characterize “low” to “very high” performance). This was followed by full group discussion to gather additional feedback and group perspective.

PLDs were updated following the September 9th meeting. Updates addressed these overarching suggestions:

- Streamline the language to keep the PLDs as straightforward and simple as possible.
- Update expectations for Growth and the Low 25 Growth indicators to increase consistency.
- Incorporate language such as “generally” and “typically” to help convey that the PLDs, while intended to inform panelist judgment, are not meant to be followed rigidly.
- Updated the framing of “C” schools to signal that overall performance in this level is “meeting expectations.”

Before adjourning, panelists completed a meeting evaluation. Results are provided in Appendix B.

Recommending Cut Scores: October 13, 2025

In the standard setting workshop, panelists engaged in multiple rounds of feedback to recommend minimum performance thresholds, or cut scores, that indicate what overall score is necessary to achieve a designated rating.

Panelists evaluated a range of school profiles (overall scores and indicator scores) to provide individual cut score recommendations specific to 700- and 1000-point schools and for districts. To inform their judgment, panelists utilized updated PLDs and related PLD guidance and a data tool to evaluate potential impact of proposed cut scores.



Panelist recommendations were summarized and shared and discussed in the full group . After two rounds of review and recommendation - which included the opportunity to update prior individual recommendations - the median cut score for each grade rating was identified as the candidate recommendation. Subsequently, panelists were given an opportunity to adjust these candidate recommendations via a review and amendment process that required fully two-thirds support from all panelists for each proposed adjustment. No amendments were proposed and the panel agreed that a third round of review was unnecessary.

Lastly, panelists completed a meeting evaluation. Results are provided in Appendix C.

Recommended Cut Scores

The recommended cut scores resulting from the standard setting process are provided below alongside preliminary impact data, i.e., the percentage of schools and districts potentially in each rating category. For contextual purposes, historical report card rating distributions and cut scores are also provided.

Recommended Cut Scores with Preliminary Impact Data: Proposed and Current*

Grade	700-Point Schools					1000-Point Schools				
	Proposed Cut Score	Preliminary Impact # %		Current Cut Score	Current Impact # %	Proposed Cut Score	Preliminary Impact # %		Current Cut Score	Current Impact # %
A	457	132	23.2%	442	173 28.1%	769	57	25.1%	754	66 28.7%
B	402	132	23.2%	337	176 28.6%	689	75	33.0%	648	106 46.1%
C	352	122	21.4%	328	124 20.1%	627	53	23.3%	584	36 15.7%
D	277	134	23.6%	269	103 16.7%	567	31	13.7%	510	21 9.1%
F	NA	49	8.6%	NA	40 6.5%	NA	11	4.8%	NA	1 0.4%

Districts					
Grade	Proposed Cut Score	Preliminary Impact # %		Current Cut Score	Current Impact # %
A	694	31	21.4%	668	52 36.1%
B	642	32	22.1%	599	41 28.5%
C	572	43	29.7%	536	36 25.0%
D	519	26	17.9%	489	11 7.6%
F	NA	13	9.0%	NA	4 2.8%

Appendix A: Panelists

Panelist Name	Position	District / Organization
Carla Evers	Member	Commission on School Accreditation
Ryan Kuykendall	Assistant Superintendent	DeSoto County
Christy Hovanetz	External Policy Advisor	Foundation for Excellence in Education
Adrian Hammitte	Superintendent	Jefferson County School District
Greg Paczak	Director of Research and Development	Madison County Schools
Eileen Beazley	Governor Staff Member	Mississippi Governor's Office
Kent McCarty	Representative	Mississippi House of Representatives
Chole Butler	House Speaker Staff Member	Mississippi House of Representatives
Nicole Boyd	Senator	Mississippi Senate
Rod Hickman <i>PLD Workshop Only</i>	Senator	Mississippi Senate
Todd English	Superintendent	Booneville School District
Chris Chism	Superintendent	Pearl Public School District
LaVonda White	Director of Accreditation, Accountability, and Assessment	Rankin County School District
Glen East	Board Member	State Board of Education

Appendix B: PLD Workshop Evaluation

10 responses

Item / Percent in Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The meeting was well organized.	90%	10%	<1%	<1%	<1%
I understood my role at this meeting.	70%	30%	<1%	<1%	<1%
I had adequate opportunities to express my views and opinions at this meeting.	90%	10%	<1%	<1%	<1%
I feel the thresholds we established today appropriately represent the feedback of the group.	40%	60%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Panelists were also invited to provide any additional comments about the September 9th meeting. The comments are not listed in this memo but were provided separately to the MDE.

Appendix C: Standard Setting Workshop Evaluation

10 responses

Item / Percent in Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The meeting was well organized.	100%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
I understood my role at this meeting.	90%	10%	<1%	<1%	<1%
I had adequate opportunities to express my views and opinions at this meeting.	90%	10%	<1%	<1%	<1%
I feel the recommended cut score for an "A" school is reasonable and appropriate.	50%	30%	10%	10%	<1%
I feel the recommended cut score for a "B" school is reasonable and appropriate.	30%	50%	10%	10%	<1%
I feel the recommended cut score for a "C" school is reasonable and appropriate.	50%	30%	10%	10%	<1%
I feel the recommended cut score for a "D" school is reasonable and appropriate.	40%	50%	<1%	10%	<1%
Overall, I endorse the process for establishing cut score recommendations.	50%	50%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Panelists were also invited to provide additional comments about the October 13th meeting or the resulting recommendations. The comments are not listed in this memo but were provided separately to the MDE.