

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**March 19, 2026**

**OFFICE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**

02. Action: Approval and renewal of Districts and Schools of Innovation for 2026-2027 [Goal 2 – MBE Strategic Plan]

Background Information: In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7, State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation, the purpose of District of Innovation is to better prepare students for success in life and work. Innovative programs shall focus on reducing achievement gaps by expanding learning experiences for students; increasing participation of subgroups of students in innovative instructional components to enhance student achievement; increasing the number of students who are college- and career- ready; reducing the number of students that exit high school in need of remediation; and motivating students by expanding curriculum choices and learning opportunities for students.

Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7, State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation, provides for exemptions from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions as approved by the MDE to allow flexibility for Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation. Districts or schools may request additional waivers if the waiver is needed to support innovative practices and does not violate state or federal regulations. Districts or schools are not allowed to request a waiver from state assessment requirements required by state or federal regulation. Absent any waivers, districts shall meet the requirements of the current Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards.

- 02.A. Action: Approval by the SBE to append Booneville School District's District of Innovation status beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
- 02.B. Action: Approval by the SBE to renew Corinth School District's District of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 with an expected addendum for the 2028-2029 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
- 02.C. Action: Approval by the SBE to award Newton School District a District of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7

State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.

- 02.D. Action: Approval by the SBE to award Union School District a District of Innovation beginning in 2024-2025 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
  
- 02.E. Action: Approval by the SBE to renew Jackson Public School District Early College High School at Tougaloo a School of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
  
- 02.F. Action: Approval by the SBE to award Western Line School District a District of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
  
- 02.G. Action: Approval by the SBE to renew Gulfport School District a District of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
  
- 02.H. Action: Approval by the SBE to append Hinds County School District's District of Innovation an addendum of their School of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.
  
- 02.I. Action: Approval by the SBE to append Meridian School District from a School of Innovation to District of Innovation beginning in 2026-2027 school year in accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 et seq., and Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 28.7 State Board Policy Chapter 28, Rule 28.7 - Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.

This item references Goal 2 of the *Mississippi Board of Education Strategic Plan*.

Recommended: Approval

Back-up material attached

**Mississippi Department of Education  
Back-up for Districts and Schools of Innovation  
2026-2027**

**02.A. Booneville School District**

**School of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Booneville School District proposes an apprenticeship-based Career and Technical Education model that allows students to earn Carnegie units through supervised, competency-based learning in authentic workplace environments. Rather than relying exclusively on traditional seat-time structures, students demonstrate mastery of Mississippi Department of Education aligned CTE standards through documented performance, mentor evaluation, and portfolio evidence.

Initial implementation will include Educator Preparation (2025–2026) and HVAC (2026–2027), delivered in partnership with local employers, the Mississippi Construction Education Foundation, and Northeast Mississippi Community College.

Instruction blends online academic modules, reflective practice, and supervised field experience. Students earn credit upon verified completion of required hours and competencies.

**Performance Measures:**

Increase total participation in apprenticeship pathways by 50% within five years.

Achieve a 90% completion rate for enrolled apprentices.

Increase CTE diploma endorsements by 25%.

Ensure 80% of HVAC students earn NCCER Level 1 certification.

Reach 85% successful placement in employment, military, or postsecondary education within six months of graduation.

Maintain participant GPA and academic standing.

Data will be reported annually through SAM Spectra, MSIS, credential documentation, and postsecondary follow-up metrics.

| Waiver                | Statutory / Policy Reference | Purpose / Rationale                            | MDE Response                                    | Verification                             |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Seat-Time Requirement | Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-67;  | Permit students to earn Carnegie units through | Yes – Not to exceed 112 hours or 60 hours for ½ | Attendance and hours tracked; competency |

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|  | Accreditation Standard 20                                      | verified apprenticeship hours (140 hours = 1 credit) rather than traditional daily attendance.   | Carnegie unit course | verification documented; annual review by district CTE Director.                                    |
| CTE Facility Requirement                           | Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, Appendix F | Allow community and industry sites (e.g., Anderson Elementary, HVACR companies) to serve as approved instructional environments.                   | Yes                  | MOE safety and supervision standards applied; annual site review and documentation.                 |
| Staffing Flexibility / Non-Traditional Instructors | State Board Policy Part 3, Chapter 28, Rule 28.7               | Allow industry-certified professionals (e.g., NCCER HVACR instructors, licensed technicians) to serve as adjunct mentors under district oversight. | Yes                  | Mentor credentials verified; training documentation maintained; oversight by district CTE Director. |
| Flexible Scheduling and Delivery                   | Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-63                                     | Permit apprenticeships during nontraditional hours, summer terms, or outside the high school campus.   | Yes                  | Scheduling approval documented; student progress reports reviewed quarterly.                        |
| Credit Awarding Based on Competency                | Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1(2)(b)                               | Authorize district to grant Carnegie unit credit based on mastery of MOE CTE competencies verified by  | Yes                  | Annual audit of competency evidence; portfolio storage and documentation maintained.                |

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|   |                         | portfolio and evaluation.  |     |   |
| Data Sharing and Partnership Agreements | MOE Data Sharing Policy | Allow exchange of student performance and credentialing data between district, NEMCC, MCEF, and business partners. | Yes | FERPA compliance review; annual legal review of agreements. |

**02.B. Corinth School District**

**School of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

The district continues implementation of its approved innovation framework aligned to Mississippi Academic Content Standards and applicable Mississippi Career and Technical Education Curriculum Frameworks.

**Performance Measures:**

Performance indicators include graduation rates, academic proficiency, ACT performance, credential attainment, dual credit participation, and postsecondary placement outcomes.

Data sources include MAAP results, ACT, Cambridge examination outcomes, intersession participation, graduation indicators, and workforce placement.

**Waiver Requested:**

| Process Standard                                     | Requested Waiver(s) from State or Local Policies, Requirements, or Restrictions                          | Rationale for Waiver Request   | MDE Response  |
|--|--|--|---|
| Process Standard 2.2 (2025 Accountability Standards) | Waiver of the 5% FTE limitation on staff working outside areas of endorsement (excluding core subjects). | Cambridge International Exam courses require teachers with deep content expertise. Business, community, and industry leaders will provide experiential | To be applied to Cambridge International Exam courses |

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|                       |   | and project-based learning despite not holding Mississippi educator licensure.   |   |
| Process Standard 2.3  | Waiver of requirement that each school employ a licensed librarian/media specialist devoting no more than ¼ workday to administrative duties. | The evolving role of library/media centers emphasizes technology integration over traditional library science. Individuals with strong technology skills can effectively perform required functions. | Yes   |
| Process Standard 13.5 | Waiver of traditional summer school/extended year program requirements under Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-49.                                       | District proposes three-week intersessions to meet academic recovery and enrichment needs rather than traditional summer school models.  | Yes   |
| Process Standard 13.2 | Waiver of 140-hour Carnegie unit seat-time requirement.   | Credit by Mastery, competency-based, and experiential learning models award credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than instructional seat time.  | Not to be less than 112 hours or 56 hours for a one-half Carnegie unit course |
| Process Standard 14.1 | Waiver of strict Carnegie unit minimums tied to standard diploma requirements.  | Implementation of a Differentiated Diploma model that does not rely solely on Carnegie unit measures.  | Yes   |

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| Process Standard 14.2                    | Waiver allowing Cambridge International Exams to serve in lieu of required state end-of-course assessments. | Continuation of Cambridge Course Exams as a locally selected nationally recognized high school assessment (LSNRHSA).   | Yes |
| Process Standard 17.8 (Gifted Education) | Waiver of traditional gifted identification and service model requirements.                                 | Implementation of Joseph Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model to provide enrichment opportunities to all students in Grades 2-8 rather than limiting services to identified gifted students. | Yes |
| Process Standard 18.1 & 18.2             | Waiver of traditional library media center material collection requirements.                                | Conversion of libraries to technology-focused internet cafés. Students have laptops and access to digital resources; physical book collection requirements reduced due to e-book utilization.  | Yes |
| Process Standard 26                      | Waiver of requirement that high school curriculum generate at least 33½ Carnegie units annually.            | District will align course offerings to the Cambridge International Exam program; certain courses traditionally counted at high school level are   | Yes |

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|  |  | delivered in middle school.  |   |
| Mississippi Public Schools Accountability Standards, 2025 – Process Standard 13.1 (Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-67) | The teaching day must provide at least 330 minutes of instruction per day. | Experiential and project-based learning included in credit-bearing courses at Corinth Middle and High School may require students to participate in off-campus activities that replace regularly scheduled class time. Therefore, the teaching day may not always include 330 minutes of instruction for all students. | Not to be less than 264 minutes or 80% of the 330 minutes required in statute |
| Mississippi Public Schools Accountability Standards, 2025 – Process Standard 13                                | Provides guidance on academic year, day, seat-time, and programming.       | Waiver needed to reorganize the academic year and secondary schedule to provide enhanced learning experiences.   | Yes   |
| Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-19-7  | Teacher Compensation – Adherence to state salary schedule and supplements. | District proposes development of a differentiated compensation system. Waiver from state law regarding salary schedule and supplements is required to implement the  | Yes   |

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|   |  | Corinth compensation plan.   |  |
| Mississippi Public Schools Accountability Standards, 2025 – Process Standard 16 | District must adhere to all requirements of the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System. | Alternate testing schedules may be necessary because the redesigned school calendar may not align with the |  |

**Governance and Oversight:**

District and school leadership teams, in collaboration with community and industry partners, monitor implementation, review outcome data, and ensure alignment with state accountability expectations.

**Sustainability:**

Corinth will maintain its model through braided funding, embedded professional learning, strong partner engagement, and continued evaluation of student performance indicators. Expansion of pathways and access remains a priority through 2030.

**02.C. Newton County School District**

**District of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Newton County School District proposes a districtwide redesign of the PreK–12 instructional experience aligned to Mississippi’s Workforce Ecosystem 6. The plan centers on a transition to a 5x5 secondary schedule, flexible K–5 activity blocks, integration of STEM and artificial intelligence, expanded dual credit and credential pathways, and individualized success planning for every student.

The district will embed early career exposure, employability skill development, and verified postsecondary placement expectations into the daily structure of schooling. Partnerships with East Central Community College, AccelerateMS, regional employers, and military representatives ensure authentic alignment between classroom learning and labor market needs.

**Performance Measures:**

- Increase graduation rate and postsecondary placement outcomes.
- Reduce chronic absenteeism through early-warning systems.
- Expand dual credit, industry credentials, and work-based learning participation.
- Ensure proportional access across student subgroups.
- Increase ACT and WorkKeys performance.

Progress will be reviewed through annual reporting, equity impact reviews, portfolio verification, and workforce credential tracking.

**Waivers Requested:**

| Process Standard      | Requested Waiver(s) from State or Local Policies, Requirements, or Restrictions  | District Rationale for Request  | MDE Response  |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| Process Standard 13.1 | Teaching day must provide at least 330 minutes of instruction per day (Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-67).  | Due to non-traditional scheduling of dual-enrolled high school students, exemption from the 330-minute requirement would allow flexibility for students to attend both high school and college classes during the academic day.   | Not to Exceed 264 minutes or 80% of the 330 minutes<br><br>Dual Credit courses to follow the Junior College requirement |
| Process Standard 13.2 | Minimum of 140 hours per Carnegie unit and 70 hours per half unit, except for remedial, dual enrollment/dual credit, correspondence, and innovative programs authorized by the State Board of Education. | Newton County School District requests modification from 140 hours to 130 hours per Carnegie unit to transition from a 4x4 Block schedule to a 5 X 5 Block schedule. This model increases instructional continuity in core subjects, allows targeted interventions, and | Yes   |

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|                       |   | provides intensified academic support.   |  |
| Process Standard 13.3 | No more than two of the 180 days may be 60% days; teachers and students must attend not less than 60% of the normal school day (Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-5(j)). | Additional professional development days are necessary to implement continuous improvement practices, PDSA cycles, and personalized instructional strategies aligned with district innovation goals.   | No more than 2 additional 60% days per year in addition to the 2 allotted normally |
| Process Standard 27.1 | In grades K-5, curriculum must include 150 minutes per week of activity-based instruction and 45 minutes per week of health education.                          | Over the course of the academic year, students will exceed the required activity-based instructional minutes while allowing flexibility within the master schedule to optimize instructional delivery. | Yes  |

**Governance and Oversight:**

The District Innovation Leadership Council, chaired by the superintendent and including school leaders, counselors, and CTE personnel, will guide implementation, monitor data, and coordinate partnerships.

**Sustainability:**

By leveraging existing staff, regional collaborations, and a structured professional learning system, the district will institutionalize the 5x5 model, ISPs, STEM/AI pathways, and work-based learning across all campuses.

**02.D. Union Public School District**

**District of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Union Public School District will implement a districtwide readiness model anchored in Individual Success Plans (ISPs), a redesigned 5x5 master schedule, and daily WIN (“What I Need”) time. The framework expands access to dual credit, industry credentials, internships, and virtual career exploration while maintaining rigorous academic expectations.

The innovation replaces one-size-fits-all scheduling with personalized pathways that connect coursework, employability skills, and postsecondary planning. Partnerships with East Central Community College, regional employers, and community organizations support authentic learning and workforce alignment.

**Performance Measures:**

- 100 percent of students will maintain and annually update an Individual Success Plan.
- Increase dual credit and credential participation annually.
- Grow internship and work-based learning participation toward 40 percent of graduates.
- Increase ACT and WorkKeys readiness benchmarks.
- Maintain strong academic growth while expanding flexibility.

Progress will be evaluated through ISP dashboards, readiness metrics, dual credit records, and annual innovation reporting.

**Waivers Requested:**

| Process Standard      | Requested Waiver(s) from State or Local Policies, Requirements, or Restrictions  | District Rationale for Waiver Request   | MDE Response  |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| Process Standard 13.2 | Requirement that a minimum of 140 hours of instruction be provided for each Carnegie unit and 70 hours for each one-half (½) unit offered, except for remedial instruction, dual enrollment/dual credit, correspondence courses, and | Because the 5x5 instructional structure utilizes flexible learning time that blends in-person, virtual, and off-campus learning experiences, the district requests a waiver from the seat-time requirement outlined in Mississippi Public | Seat time reduction not to exceed 112 hours yearly or 60 hours for each one-half unit offered |

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|  | <p>innovative programs authorized by the State Board of Education.</p> | <p>School Accountability Standard 13.2. This waiver will allow instructional time earned through non-traditional formats, including virtual, experiential, and competency-based learning, to count toward Carnegie unit credit while maintaining full accountability for instructional quality and student outcomes. Reduced seat-time requirements also allow students to earn credits earlier, creating greater opportunities for personalized, career-aligned, and relevant learning experiences later in their high school years.</p> |  |
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**Governance and Oversight:**

The Superintendent’s Leadership Team, building principals, counselors, and the Career Experiences Coordinator will monitor implementation through quarterly reviews of ISP progress, academic growth, and readiness outcomes.

**Sustainability:**

Through phased expansion, embedded professional development, and durable community partnerships, Union will institutionalize ISPs, WIN structures, and work-based learning across grades 7–12.

## **02.E. Jackson Public Schools – J-TECHS**

### **School of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Jackson Public Schools, in partnership with Tougaloo College, requests renewal of the JPS–Tougaloo Early College High School (J-TECHS). Established in 2018, the program enables scholars to begin earning college credit in grade nine within a structured, high-support environment aligned to the district’s strategic plan for postsecondary attainment.

J-TECHS integrates Individual Success Plans, grade-level seminars, ACT preparation, early alert systems, and intensive advising coordinated with Tougaloo’s Office of Retention. Scholars may complete up to two years of college coursework or earn an associate degree while enrolled in high school.

### **Performance Measures:**

- Maintain a 100 percent high school graduation rate.
- Sustain seamless postsecondary enrollment for participating cohorts.
- Increase college credit accumulation and associate degree completion.
- Raise ACT composite performance toward a target of 30 by 2030.
- Expand experiential learning participation including job shadowing and fellowships.

### **Waivers Requested:**

The district continues to operate under previously approved innovation flexibilities. No additional waiver requests are included in this renewal.

### **Governance and Oversight:**

Program leadership includes district administration, the J-TECHS director, and Tougaloo College partners who coordinate early alerts, scholar supports, and progress monitoring.

### **Sustainability:**

Long-standing institutional partnership, aligned advising systems, and demonstrated outcomes in credit attainment, scholarships, and college transition ensure continued viability and expansion.

## **02.F. Western Line School District**

### **District of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Western Line School District proposes a comprehensive K–12 coherence model designed to eliminate persistent middle-grade underperformance and ensure every graduate exits with a clear, credential-aligned pathway. The plan integrates Junior Achievement, Leader in Me, Individual Success Plans, and expanded postsecondary partnerships into a vertically aligned system.

A primary feature is redesign of grades 7–8 through a 5x5 block schedule and implementation of the Star Academy school-within-a-school model for students requiring intensive intervention. At the high school level, a 4x4 structure allows students to complete graduation

requirements early and transition into Middle College, CTE Middle College, Greenville Technical Center pathways, or workforce-aligned programs.

**Performance Measures:**

- Increase middle-grade proficiency in ELA and Math by 5 percentage points annually.
- Improve growth for lowest-performing students by at least 15 percentage points over five years.
- Ensure every student declares a pathway by the end of grade 9.
- Increase graduation rate by 10 percent and reduce dropout rate by 10 percent.
- Increase completion of dual credit, AP, and industry credentials by 25 percent.

**Waivers Requested:**

| Process Standard / Statutory Reference                                   | Requested Waiver(s) from State or Local Policies, Requirements, or Restrictions | District Rationale for Waiver Request  | MDE Response   |
|--|---|--|--|
| Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards Process Standard 13.2 | Flexibility from minimum Carnegie unit seat-time requirements.                  | Flexibility is required to operationalize the innovative 5x5 Middle Grade Block Schedule, which emphasizes Mastery Over Seat Time. The design extends ELA and Math to full-year 90-minute blocks for acceleration and remediation and embeds a Career Discovery course requiring minute reallocation. Under the block structure, certain semester courses receive reduced seat time: Cyber Foundations (1.0 credit) receives approximately 112 | Seat time flexibility not to be less than 112 hours yearly or 60 hours for a one-half Carnegie unit course |

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|  |   | <p>hours (instead of 140); World Geography (0.5 credit) and Mississippi Studies (0.5 credit) each receive approximately 55 hours (instead of 70). This waiver supports implementation of the high school 4x4 block schedule and the CTE Middle College pathway. Students commuting approximately 45 miles to MDCC face scheduling conflicts; since MDCC is closed on Fridays, flexibility allows Friday use for seat-time recovery, intervention, ACT prep, and college readiness activities while maintaining full high school credit attainment.</p> |  |
| <p>Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-91 and Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards Process Standard 13</p> | <p>Flexibility in daily attendance and on-site presence requirements for off-campus programs.</p> | <p>Flexibility is essential for students enrolled in CTE Middle College at MDCC and Work-Based Learning (WBL) experiences requiring significant off-campus time. This waiver allows</p>  | <p>Attendance on campus waiver is granted with the understanding accurate attendance will be taken daily</p> |

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|  |  | <p>supervised off-campus educational activities such as WBL, internships, and job shadowing to count as full school-day attendance rather than excused absences. Students engaged in extended WBL or internships cannot maintain full daily presence on the high school campus; recognizing supervised learning time as attendance prevents unlawful absences and ensures credit attainment under Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-91.</p> |  |
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**Governance and Oversight:**

A District Steering Committee composed of the superintendent, principals, counselors, and CCR leaders will monitor fidelity to scheduling, ISP completion, and pathway access. A Community Engagement Council including industry and postsecondary partners will review outcomes quarterly.

**Sustainability:**

Braided federal, state, and partner resources support Leader in Me, Junior Achievement, Star Academy, and expanded college partnerships. The district will phase investments over five years to institutionalize structural changes and maintain long-term impact.

**02.G. Gulfport School District**

**District of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Gulfport School District seeks renewal of its District of Innovation designation to continue a comprehensive college and career readiness system anchored in Individual Success Plans (ISPs), the Academic Institutes at Gulfport, and deep business and industry partnerships.

Students experience vertically aligned career exploration beginning in elementary school, structured transition counseling in middle grades, and intensive pathway selection in high school. The district maintains strong access to Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, middle college opportunities, and nationally recognized credentials while sustaining universal ACT, WorkKeys, and career readiness supports.

**Performance Measures:**

- Increase ACT performance toward or above national averages.
- Sustain annual growth in students earning Silver or higher on WorkKeys.
- Expand participation in internships, mentorships, and job shadowing experiences.
- Increase middle college and dual enrollment participation.
- Improve graduation and postsecondary placement outcomes.

**Waivers Requested:**

| Requested Waiver(s) from State or Local policies, Requirements, or Restrictions | District Rationale for Request   | MDE Response  | MDE Rationale for Waiver Approval or Disapproval       |
|---|--|---|--|
| Standard 13.2 – Seat Time (Continuation)  | Supports the 5-block schedule, increased AP/dual credit access, remediation, and virtual delivery.   | Yes   | Provides flexibility while maintaining accountability. |
| Standard 13.1 – Seat Time for Virtual Students (Continuation)                   | Allows blended synchronous/asynchronous instruction with documented engagement.  | Yes   | Aligned to virtual learning guidance.                  |
| Standard 2.2 – Science Certification Flexibility (Continuation)                 | Allows staffing aligned to innovative science sequencing. Using a teacher not certified in physical science but certified in science   | Yes   | Supported by outcome data.                             |
| Standard 26 – CCR Carnegie Unit   | In lieu of the College and Career Readiness Course, Gulfport High School students will earn a Carnegie unit based on the fact that students have satisfied the majority of those standards in kindergarten through eighth-grade experiences. The few remaining standards will be incorporated in the | No Waiver Necessary see Appendix A-6 of the 2025 accreditation standards – ¼ per semester starting with the freshman year – it is allowable for virtual options as well if it is in | Local evidence demonstrates mastery.                   |

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|  | Academic Institute at Gulfport prior to graduation (excluding transfer students into the district after ninth grade). Surveyed students demonstrate that students are exposed to the standards through their experiences in the Gulfport School District (see Attachment 12: Career Pathway Survey).  | local school board policy   |                             |
| Standard 2.2 – Extend CTE to Grades 7–8        | Provides earlier exposure and stronger ISP alignment. Allow CTE courses with grade spans of 9-12 to be extended to include grades 7th and 8th as supported through teacher licensure endorsements.  | Yes   | Expands pipeline readiness. |
| Standard 2.2 – Language Instructor Flexibility | Supports global workforce needs and access to additional languages. Allow language-trained educators who are certified to teach other coursework to instruct students in languages where the instructor can show proficiency and fluency (i.e., certificate of training, Praxis, completion of coursework, governmental experience, military experience).<br><br>A variety of language accessibility promotes job opportunities that extend to corporate America and governmental agencies. | Yes for French, Mandarin, Chinese, Russian, Latin, and other non-mainstream languages that may lead to a career Pathway opportunity | Expands opportunity.        |

**Governance and Oversight:**

The district leadership, superintendent, high school principals, CTE administration, and business partners review implementation data, monitor ISP fidelity, and coordinate workforce alignment.

**Sustainability:**

Through long-standing industry partnerships, established staffing models, and a mature ISP framework, Gulfport will continue expanding access to credentials, dual credit, and career-connected learning.

**02.H. Hinds County School District****School of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Hinds County School District requests approval to expand its District of Innovation framework through creation of an Early College High School in partnership with Hinds Community College. Beginning in Fall 2026, students will attend classes on the Utica campus and engage in a full college course load while completing high school graduation requirements.

The model builds upon the district's existing academy structure and work-based learning commitments by providing direct access to college-level expectations, accelerated credit accumulation, and structured advising. The initiative is designed to improve graduation rates, reduce remediation, and increase postsecondary attainment, particularly for first-generation and economically disadvantaged students.

**Performance Measures:**

- Increase high school graduation rates.
- Increase college enrollment and degree attainment.
- Expand access for historically underrepresented students.
- Increase dual credit and transcribed hours earned prior to graduation.

**Waivers Requested:**

Waiver authorities previously granted under the district's innovation status remain in effect. No additional waivers beyond those contained in the approved framework are requested in this addendum.

**Governance and Oversight:**

A Director/Counselor employed by the district will oversee daily operations at the Utica campus in collaboration with Hinds Community College leadership. Joint review of academic progress, satisfaction, and operational effectiveness will occur annually.

**Sustainability:**

Funding will be braided from district and federal sources. Existing agreements with Hinds Community College provide facilities, faculty, and student supports necessary for long-term implementation.

## **02.I. Meridian Public School District**

### **District of Innovation Plan Synopsis:**

Meridian Public School District seeks amendment of its existing School of Innovation designation to recognize the evolution of its work into a fully aligned District of Innovation framework. The amendment incorporates the Middle College program, PK–5 Pocket Academies, and Middle School Mini Academies into a coherent PreK–12 system of college and career preparation.

The original designation transformed Meridian High School into wall-to-wall academies organized around Health and Human Services, Business and Industry, and Arts and Sciences, supported by a Freshman Academy. Since approval, the district has expanded vertical alignment so that career awareness, leadership development, and pathway exploration now begin in the earliest grades and continue through postsecondary transition.

District recognition ensures systemic accountability, strengthens cross-campus collaboration, and sustains partnerships with postsecondary institutions and industry while preserving successful practices such as the 5x5 schedule, PAL, and ACT/WorkKeys integration.

### **Performance Measures:**

- Increase student engagement, attendance, and graduation outcomes.
- Expand early college participation and credit attainment.
- Strengthen vertical alignment of career pathways from PK through grade 12.
- Improve postsecondary readiness and transition metrics.

### **Waivers Requested:**

No additional waivers are requested as part of this amendment.

### **Governance and Oversight:**

District leadership, academy administrators, and postsecondary partners will continue joint planning, data review, and continuous improvement cycles to ensure fidelity and sustainability.

### **Sustainability:**

Through embedded structures, established partnerships, and a proven academy framework, Meridian will maintain and scale its vertically aligned system of career-connected learning.