

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**February 15, 2018**

**OFFICE OF ACCREDITATION**  
**OFFICE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**

05. Action: Establish the Mississippi Innovation Lab Network Project (MS ILN), a partnership between the Mississippi Department of Education and selected A and B school districts, to advance new models of learning that can better prepare all students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century [Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan]

Background Information: The Commission on School Accreditation met on February 1, 2018, to review the proposed recommendation by the Office of Secondary Education to establish The Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN) a partnership between A and B school districts and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to provide a space for sharing innovative strategies and learning about ways to transform our education system.

For the MS-ILN “innovation” is used as “a new or creative alternative to existing instructional and administrative practices intended to improve student learning and student performance of all students.” To be more specific, “Learning Innovation” is about moving from the teaching system of the 20th century to a new “learning system” of the 21st century where learning and the “facilitation of learning” (teaching) are the central elements.

The goals for MS-ILN are:

1. Building and supporting a network of district and school leaders dedicated to using innovation to improve the education outcomes for students in MS
2. Sharing best-practices from innovative districts in Mississippi
3. Extending innovative opportunities to isolated rural districts
4. Creating and supporting a Middle School Task Force to increase the focus on academic, social/emotional, and cultural issues leading to student engagement/success
5. Identifying goals and supports for middle schools in MS
6. Using implementation data to help inform changes to the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2017*.

The Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN) will evaluate selected and approved process standards to make recommendations for changes to the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*. To better inform decisions about changes in the current standards, school districts in the MS-ILN will be allowed to implement new innovative approaches to accreditation standards based on the ILN Professional Learning Community (PLC) in which they are engaged.

This item references Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 of the *Mississippi Board of Education 2016-2020 Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

## **Mississippi Innovation Lab Network Project**

The 21st century learning environment is rapidly changing and too often schools are not making changes that engage students in a way that encourages career aspirations or facilitates future opportunity. Children need hope in the future and need to be engaged in schools by relevant and exciting interventions. Advancements in technology, coupled with evolving workforce demands, require students be given opportunities to achieve at their own pace, whether advancing beyond standard mastery or requiring additional support to achieve proficiency.

To move Mississippi ahead and to provide opportunities for more districts to implement strategies that prepare all students to be college and career ready, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) will establish the Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN). This network of A and B districts will work together in small learning communities to identify, test, and implement student-centered approaches to learning to help transform education in Mississippi.

### **Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN)**

The MS Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN) will be a network of approved districts that pilot, scale, and improve student-centered approaches to learning, including personalized, competency-based, and anytime/anywhere learning. Districts will collaborate in learning communities to implement policies and improve practices to support underserved students. The network and membership for joining the network has no cost associated with it but does require a commitment from district administrators and teachers, district superintendents, and local school boards to join and receive support for their work.

This process will be modeled after the CCSSO ILN network of which MS is now a participant. Support will also be offered through CCSSO. We have been awarded a small seed grant to support the MS-ILN work. Districts may join the MS-ILN through a letter of commitment.

In establishing the MS-ILN, we are requesting the authority to grant selected waivers for A and B districts participating in the MS-ILN. The waiver(s) will allow for removing barriers that might exist in implementing certain strategies in the district designed to improve learning. Outcomes from the pilot will provide guidance in making changes to the process standards in the *MS Public School Accountability Standards, 2017*.

The MS-ILN process will also be used to identify Districts of Innovation participants. A district that wishes to be identified as a District of Innovation will be invited to participate in the MS-ILN one year prior to making application for District of Innovation status. This one-year period allows collaboration with participating Districts of Innovation and the MDE to provide technical

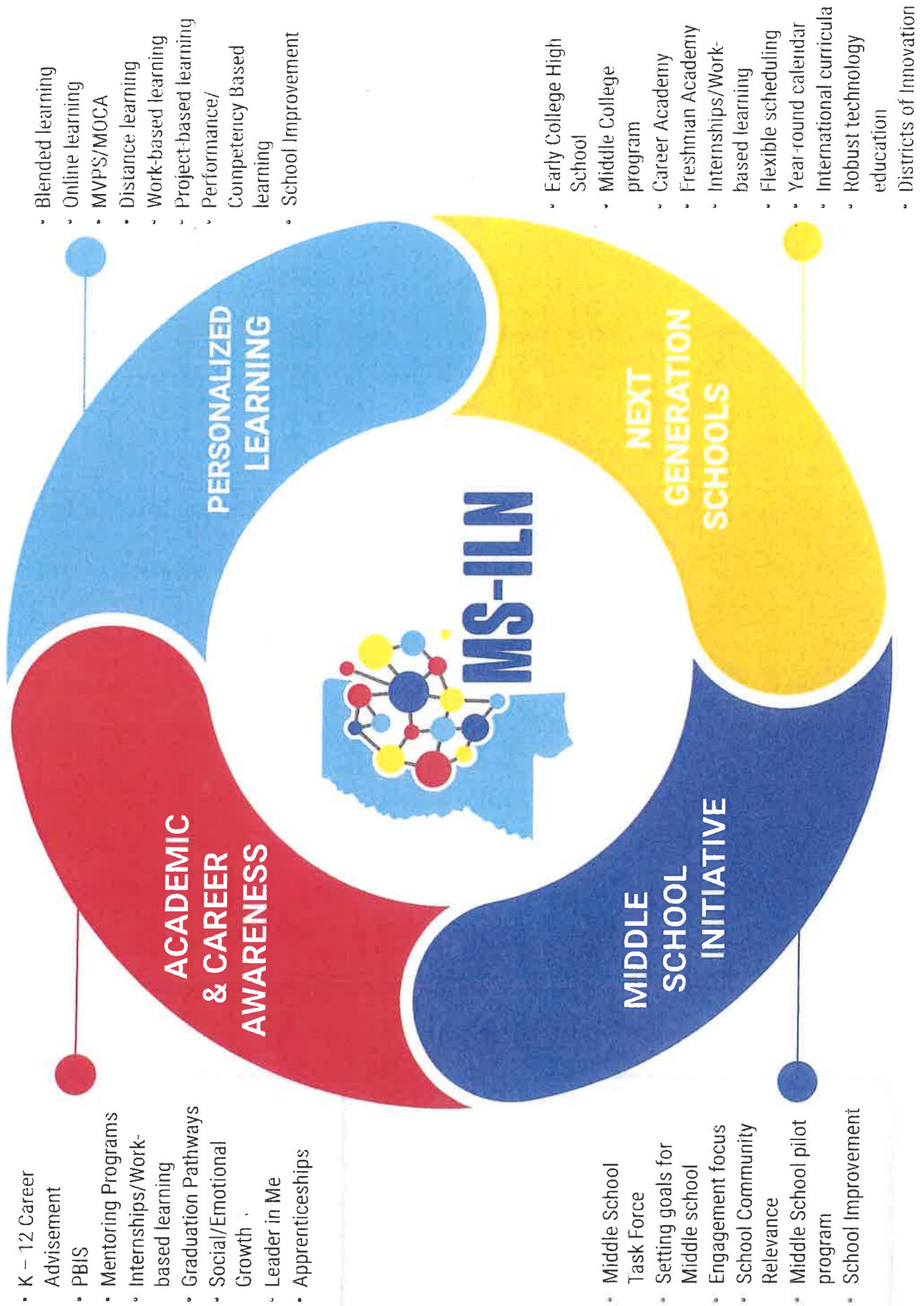
assistance to the district and to evaluate the district's readiness to be titled a District of Innovation.

### **Innovation Projects**

A district may incorporate in its application any innovative strategies and models that have been shown to be effective in other districts or states or new innovative strategies or models created by the district or school. Innovative strategies may include:

- 1) Moving to a competency-based learning system, including the development of alternate methods for delivering curriculum or for measuring mastery of standards and skills;
- 2) Creating multiple pathways to graduation, including rigorous career and technical pathways, apprenticeships, early college high schools, early graduation options, or digital learning opportunities;
- 3) Rethinking the times and places that learning occurs, including lengthening or flexing the school day or school year, moving learning beyond the traditional school building, or incorporating expanded learning opportunities;
- 4) Implementing forms of school governance that include the engagement of teachers, parents, and community members;
- 5) Designing learning environments that include the student in the guidance and career development for K-12 students;
- 6) Creating additional job classifications for certified or classified staff beyond the traditional roles of teacher and instructional assistants and compensating staff on schedules other than single salary schedules.

**There will be no waivers for any regulation that relates to: health and safety; civil rights; federal law; and regulations related to state assessment and accountability.**



# Mississippi Innovation Lab Network

## LETTER OF COMMITMENT

### I. Statement of Purpose

The Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN) is a partnership between A and B school districts and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to provide a space for sharing innovative strategies and learning about ways to transform our education system. The MDE participates in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Innovation Lab Network and is committed to working with districts within Mississippi to advance new models of learning that can best prepare all students for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The MS-ILN is a multidisciplinary, collaboration of local education agencies and the MDE providing expert guidance and support in education.

The MS-ILN facilitates issue-specific and purpose-focused working groups, executive roundtables, collaborative webinars, and best-practice briefings to bring participants together and tackle a spectrum of key education challenges.

The MS-ILN provides opportunities to experience connecting, communicating, and creating innovative solutions alongside peers in education, potential partners, leading companies, and key government stakeholders.

The MS-ILN actively pulls together district, state, and national education leaders to identify actionable solutions that leverage innovation, technology and next generation implementations.

The purpose of the MS-ILN is to advance the creation, evolution, promotion, and support of innovative technology-enhanced solutions in education; and cultivate an enriched environment for students and educators to experience academic, social, and career-oriented success.

This **Letter of Commitment (LOC)** establishes a partnership between the Mississippi Department of Education and *type your district name here* School District for the remainder of the 2017-2018 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

### II. Background and Beliefs

The MS-ILN is grounded in six (6) critical attributes of innovation identified by the CCSSO ILN:

1. Fostering world-class knowledge and skills
2. Student agency
3. Personalized learning
4. Performance-based assessment

5. Anytime/anywhere opportunities
6. Providing comprehensive systems of learner support

**In addition, the MS-ILN is committed to state priorities:**

1. Building the capacity of districts to implement systems of personalized learning, including teacher and leader competencies for personalized learning
2. Piloting new school structures that incorporate measures to decrease achievement gaps between subgroups of students
3. Working with districts to identify practices that would inform and guide changes in the current accreditation standards as identified by the Commission on School Accreditation.

### **III. Mutual Commitments**

**Benefits of joining the MS-ILN**

The MDE believes that the greatest benefit of participation in the MS-ILN is the chance to network with other Mississippi innovative districts, as well as schools and organizations outside of the state, to share evidence-based practices and learning. In addition, the MDE will commit to the MS-ILN districts in the following ways:

1. The MDE will be committed to the full implementation of the MS-ILN outlined in Section I and will facilitate and schedule at least four (4) whole-network meetings per year.
2. The MDE will work with the Member's staff and other Parties to develop a model for facilitating the collaboration of best practices across the state.
3. The MDE will provide technical assistance to the Members in the following areas: identifying mentor/coach districts, developing protocol for collaboration, engaging network members, facilitating communication between Members, and implementing Member supports.
4. The MDE will provide appropriate and relevant professional development for the Members and will share best practices from other Members across the state.
5. The MDE will work with relevant offices to develop policies and practices that are supportive of MS-ILN schools.
6. The MDE will maintain a database of innovative practices and outcomes associated with the MS-ILN. The MDE will report on the progress and outcomes of the MS-ILN a regular basis.

**Participation criteria**

By signing this LOC, member districts indicate a commitment to the work of the MS-ILN, including the following practices:

1. Member will be committed to the full implementation of MS-ILN as outlined in Section I, including participating in quarterly meetings of the MS-ILN, as well as participating in monthly calls for PLCs as needed. Examples may include: joining a personalized learning study group; contributing to educational research efforts; giving feedback on best practices; or other projects that may arise.
2. Member will share information with other Members to help inform participating network programs.
3. Member will ensure that other participating members in the district receive mentoring/coaching from an education professional, including an opportunity to communicate in writing or online and face-to-face interaction on at least four (4) occasions per year.
4. Member will work with the MS-ILN to collect data concerning innovative practices for submission to the MDE database, including submitting an annual highlight relating 2-3 district

specific policies and/or practices as well as project outcomes. The focus of these reports should emphasize approaches that move toward vastly improved levels of student learning and success through redesigned systems.

#### **iv. MS-ILN Innovation Focus**

Contact information:

*District name*

*Superintendent's name and email address*

*Designated MS-ILN contact information, name and email*

Within the framework of the priorities outlined in this LOC, please identify 2-3 points of action for your district level innovation(s). (Your annual report will be a summation of these points of action.)

- *2-3 points of action here*
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#### **v. Agreement**

The MDE and the MS-ILN districts agree to the principles and commitments described above, and agree to work together in good faith to advance both collective and district commitments. This agreement is for the current and the next school year with the intent that this work will be sustained and scaled over the longer term. It is mutually understood that this agreement in no way restricts the district from participating in similar activities with other organizations.

Amendments to the innovation priorities may be made at any time by agreement of the parties and MS-ILN districts may terminate the agreement through written notice. Early termination may result in the loss of supports outlined above.

**There will be no waivers for any regulation that relates to: health and safety; civil rights; federal law; and regulations related to state assessment and accountability.**

#### **Required Signatories**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*MS-ILN Participating District, Superintendent*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*MS-ILN Participating District, Board Chair*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Mississippi Innovation Lab Network, MDE Designee*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date:*

*February 1, 2018*



Return this Letter of Commitment via email to:  
Jean Massey  
[jmassey@mdek12.org](mailto:jmassey@mdek12.org)

Or via mail to:  
Mississippi Department of Education  
Office of Secondary Education  
c/o Jean Massey  
359 North West Street  
Jackson, MS 39205



The Mississippi Innovation Lab Network (MS-ILN) will evaluate the following standards to make recommendations for changes to the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*. To make informed decisions about changes in the current standards, school districts in the MS-ILN will be allowed to implement new innovative approaches to these accreditation standards in the following areas based on the MS-ILN Professional Learning Community (PLC) in which they are engaged.

Areas highlighted in red will be explored during the MS-ILN project.

**There will be no waivers for any regulation that relates to: health and safety; civil rights; federal law; and regulations related to state assessment and accountability.**

### Process Standards

All district professional positions requiring licensed staff are filled by staff that are properly licensed and endorsed as required by state law and federal requirements of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA). {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-9-7} (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 80, R. 80.1, R. 80.2, and ESEA, and Federal Code)

- 2.1 The school district employs an appropriately licensed full-time principal at each school. The principal may not have any other job duties assigned in areas that require a specific work area code unless a waiver is granted by the Commission on School Accreditation. This standard does not apply to assistant principals. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-9-7, § 37-9-15, and § 37-151-5(g)}
- 2.2 With the exception of academic core subjects, the professional staff in each school is comprised of no more than 5% of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) units working outside the area or areas of endorsement. Assistant principals and administrative interns who are not properly endorsed may be included in the 5% FTE working outside their area of endorsement, provided that they do not act in the place of the principal. An appropriate license is required for superintendents, principals, librarians, and guidance counselors.
- 2.3 The school district employs in each school a licensed librarian or media specialist who devotes no more than one-fourth ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the workday to library/media administrative activities. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(3)(a-e)}
  - 2.3.1 If the student enrollment is 499 or less, a half-time licensed librarian or media specialist is required.
  - 2.3.2 If the student enrollment is 500 or more, a full-time licensed librarian or media specialist is required.

- 2.4 Student support services (appraisal, academic, and/or personal advisement, and educational and/or career planning and referral) are provided in each school by qualified student support personnel. Student support personnel may only provide those services and activities in the area(s) that each individual is specifically qualified to provide and will use only job titles that reflect same. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-9-79}
  - 2.5 The school district employs a school business officer/administrator whose qualifications meet the criteria established by the Mississippi Department of Education and whose primary job responsibilities are conducting, supervising, and/or directing the financial affairs and operations of the school district. (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 71, R. 71.1, R. 71.2)
9. The school district engages in planning to review the educational status of each school in the district and to address specific actions relative to accreditation and performance separately. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-49(2)(e)}
  11. The school district shall develop and implement a program designed to keep students in school and to lower student dropout rates. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-80} (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 30, R. 30.5)
  13. The academic year provides a minimum of 180 teaching days in which both teachers and pupils are in regular attendance for scheduled classroom instruction. Any request for an exception to this standard must be submitted in writing to the Commission on School Accreditation for review and action. If the Governor has declared a disaster emergency or the President of the United States has declared an emergency or major disaster to exist in this state, the local school board may request approval from the State Board of Education to operate the schools in its district for less than one hundred eighty (180) days. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-7(3)(d)} {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-49, §§ 37-13-61 through 69, § 37-151-5(j), and § 37-151-7(3)(c)}
  - 13.1 The teaching day must provide at least 330 minutes of instruction per day. {Miss. Code Ann. 37-13-67}
  - 13.2 The school district must ensure that during the academic school year a minimum of 140 hours of instruction is provided for each Carnegie unit of credit offered and 70 hours for each one-half (½) unit offered, except for remedial instructional programs, dual enrollment/dual credit, correspondence courses, MS Virtual Public-School courses, and innovative programs authorized by the State Board of Education.
  - 13.3 No more than two (2) of the 180 days may be 60% days. Both teachers and pupils must be in attendance for not less than 60% of the normal school day. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-5(j)}
  - 13.4 The school district schedules preparation for graduation ceremonies in such manner that graduating seniors are absent from classes for no more than three (3) days prior to the end of the school year. (Districts Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance are exempted.)
  - 13.5 The summer school/extended year program [not Extended School Year (ESY) provided through special education programs] meets all applicable requirements of the regular school program. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-49}

## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

18. Each school has a library media center. Refer to the current edition of the Mississippi School Library Media Guide. {Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-17-6(3)(a-e)}
  - 18.1 Each school has a library media center with an organized collection of materials and equipment that represents a broad range of current learning media, including instructional technology (Accreditation Policy 4.2.1 - Exemptions for Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance).
  - 18.2 The library staff offers a systematic program of service to students and staff by providing access to the materials and equipment, by providing instruction in the use of the materials and equipment, and by working with teachers and other staff members to provide learning activities for the students (Accreditation Policy 4.2.1 - Exemptions for Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance).
24. Each classroom teacher, excluding career-technical teachers whose class periods exceed 50 minutes, has an unencumbered period of time during the teaching day to be used for individual or departmental planning.
  - 24.1 If the school utilizes a traditional six-period or seven-period day schedule, the instructional planning time provided for secondary teachers is a minimum of 225 minutes per week, exclusive of lunch period. If the school utilizes any form of a modular/block schedule, the instructional planning time provided is a minimum of either 225 minutes per week or an average of 225 minutes per week per instructional cycle, exclusive of lunch period.
  - 24.2 Instructional planning time for the elementary school teacher is no less than 150 minutes per week, exclusive of lunch period.
25. Individual teachers (grades 9-12) are limited to three (3) course preparations per scheduling cycle or five (5) in the same subject/content area. Any request for an exception must be submitted in writing to the Commission on School Accreditation for review and action.
27. The curriculum of each elementary or middle school (any configuration of grades K-8) at a minimum consists of reading/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, health education, and physical education, which may be taught by a regular classroom teacher. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-1-3(2) and § 37-13-134}
  - 27.1 In any configuration of grades K-8, the curriculum must include 150 minutes of activity-based instruction per week and 45 minutes of instruction in health education per week.
  - 27.2 Implementation of the activity-based instruction must meet or exceed the standards as approved by the State Board of Education.
  - 27.3 A regular classroom teacher may provide instruction in the arts, health education, and physical education in a self-contained classroom setting.
28. Student teacher ratios do not exceed the following: {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77}

- 28.1 Student teacher ratios do not exceed 22 to 1 in kindergarten, except in instances in which a full-time assistant teacher is in the classroom. If a full-time assistant teacher is employed, 27 may be enrolled. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77} (See Mississippi Kindergarten Guidelines.) (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 19, R. 19.1)
- 28.2 Student teacher ratios do not exceed 27 to 1 in classrooms serving grades 1 through 4 unless approved by the State Board of Education. (Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance are exempted.) {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77} (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 19, R. 19.1)
- 28.3 Student teacher ratios do not exceed 30 to 1 in self-contained classes serving grades 5-8. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77} A one-year waiver may be requested for classes that do not exceed more than two (2) students beyond the allowable student teacher ratio.
- 28.4 Student teacher ratios do not exceed 33 to 1 in departmentalized academic core classes serving grades 5-12. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77} A one-year waiver may be requested for classes that do not exceed more than two (2) students beyond the allowable student teacher ratio.
- 28.5 The total number of students taught by an individual teacher in academic core subjects at any time during the school year shall not exceed 150. A teacher who provides instruction through intra-district or inter-district distance learning or supervises students taking virtual courses will be exempt from the 150-student limitation. A lab facilitator or principal designee will be responsible for the assignment of grades and related activities at the receiving school. (Schools Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance are exempted.)



# Timeline

**February 1, 2018** – @ MDE – Presentation to Commission on School Accreditation

**February 2, 2018** – Webinar with innovative leadership participants

**February 12, 2018** – @ Mississippi State University; Starkville, MS – MS ILN (80 participants expected) First meeting of the MS ILN with leadership from innovative districts in implementation of: 1. Alternative school calendars and international curriculum, 2. True career academies, 3. K-12 social/behavioral programs, 4. Enhanced Dual Credit programs, Early College High Schools, and Middle College programs. Additionally, there will be facilitated work groups focused on 1. Defining personalized learning 2. Equity of access to innovative and advanced programs 3. Profile of a Mississippi graduate

**March 1, 2018** – @ MDE – Letters of Commitment for MS-ILN due

**March 26, 2018** – @ MDE MS-ILN facilitation – This whole group meeting is a check-in with district leaders to ensure open communication and includes a small group session for leaders to meet in a networking fashion. Again, the small groups will focus on exemplar programs and how to scale these out to rural, isolated districts. Time will be spent to schedule whole MS-ILN convenings, as well as the small group PLC meetings through June 2019.

**April 19-21, 2018** – @ CCSO ILN Convening – This national networking meeting space has yet to be determined. The MDE representatives to the Whole Child PLC and State Agency PLC will meet with other ILN members across the nation.

**June 18-19, 2018** – @ Mississippi State RCU – Mississippi Innovative Institute – This is the third year for our innovative institute. Our conference was well-attended in the summer of 2017 and we hope with our renewed commitment to networking, coaching, and mentoring, it will be even bigger this year. With our focus on active collaboration through the ILN, we will increase state-wide district involvement.

**September 2018** - @ MDE – The fall MS-ILN convening will focus on how initial implementation in districts is going and an assessment of existing and needed supports.