

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**May 20, 2021**

**OFFICE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**

08. Action: Approval of District of Innovation status for the Gulfport School District for 2021-2022 [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 a District of Innovations 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.

The Office of Secondary Education is requesting approval to renew Gulfport School District as a district of innovation. All programs will be continued from the past five years, and additional work will include a school-to-home virtual component and sharing teachers virtually with other school districts. Gulfport School District uses a Career Pathways Model to emphasize goal setting and career exploration based on academic strengths. From 2015 to 2019 the number of student internships providing Career Focus opportunities have almost doubled 278 to 465. The teacher turnover rate has dropped to 13% for the past four years. Finally, 69.6% of students taking the WorkKeys assessment in 2020 obtained a Silver or higher rating.

This item references Goal 2 of the *Mississippi Board of Education 2018-2022 Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

**District of Innovation  
Gulfport School District  
Renewal for 2021-2022**

As one of the three original school districts named as a District of Innovation, the Gulfport School District has been able to use the Innovations concept to research and provide sound educational practices to districts inside and outside Mississippi. Please note the following:

- A Career Pathways Model where students continue their rigorous academic work with a major emphasis on goal setting and career exploration based on academic strengths. This begins in fourth grade and concludes with the completion of a student's Career Pathway Plan that begins in the sixth grade and is reviewed annually through secondary education.
- Offering of Carnegie units in the middle school environment.
- ACT Aspire as a tool for post-secondary education and as a tool to explore how academic strengths prepare students for planning their path in Career Pathway Academies and future vocations.
- Class-wide ACT for all Gulfport School District 10th graders, which has developed into statewide Junior Class ACT testing. The Gulfport School District still provides the Sophomore ACT test to all students.
- Middle College for high school juniors and seniors -known as Collegiate Academy in the community college environment.
- Open enrollment for Advanced Placement classes with Gulfport School District-financed testing.
- A five-period academic day at the high school level that opens up opportunities for internships, externships, and the opportunity to graduate and walk directly into the workforce with highly skilled training in areas such as shipbuilding, transportation, logistics, and electricity.

Those reviewing this renewal will also find the Gulfport School District's desire to model several other school districts in Mississippi by continuing the District's School-to-Home virtual component and sharing our talent pool of hard-to-find teachers with other school districts.

<b>Process Standard</b>	<b>Requested Waiver</b>	<b>Rationale for Waiver Request</b>
Standard 2.2	Allow a 181, 187 or 188 certification be allowed to teach in other science subjects with the Modeling Training.	Due to Gulfport's nontraditional courses especially in science, it makes it impossible to find proper certification with the suggested science sequence. Gulfport ACT data has proven that the sequence being currently used has better prepared students to become problem solvers in science.

<b>Process Standard</b>	<b>Requested Waiver</b>	<b>Rationale for Waiver Request</b>
Standard 13.2	Waiver from "Seat Time"	Due to the nontraditional scheduling 5 Block day/75 minutes per block, Gulfport courses do not meet the minimum number of minutes in the accreditation standards. Since Gulfport is on a nontraditional schedule, students are receiving more instructional time in core areas of math, science, and English over a four-year period. According to Gulfport data, this schedule has allowed teachers and students to increase ACT scores significantly, increase graduation rate, allow for more students to enroll in AP and Dual Credit classes, and provide more time for remediation of students.