



Mississippi P-16 Community Engagement Council Network

BUILDING YOUR P-16

This document provides a practical guide for school districts and communities that are seeking to build P-16 Community Engagement Councils in Mississippi. It provides guidance on policy and logistics that will assist in the development of successful P-16 Councils.

*A How To Guide for
Establishing P-16
Community
Engagement
Councils*

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Introduction

Across the nation, P-16 Community Engagement Councils have been developed in various forms to help school districts address their most pressing challenges and embrace their unique opportunities. Seeing the success of P-16 Councils in engaging community members and increasing the pool of positive ideas for schools, the Mississippi Department of Education has embraced P-16 Councils as mechanisms by which to aid schools in overcoming obstacles to student success. To that end, the Mississippi Department of Education has released pilot guidelines (see Appendix A) for the creation of P-16 Councils. This guide serves as a support mechanism and provides many of the logistics of how to put one into place, how to guide meetings, etc. The recommendations provided herein are based on the spirit and intent of the pilot guidelines and work in conjunction with them. This document will provide guidance on every step of the process in order to assist districts, schools and communities in developing P-16 Councils. This guide was produced by The Center for Education Innovation's Community, Family, and School Engagement team.

What is a P-16 Council?

P-16 stands for Pre-Kindergarten through higher education (or year 16 of education). P-16 Councils are community-based entities that unite a cross-section of the community from early care providers and community members with young children through parents and staff of local school districts to businesses, college-representatives, and concerned citizens. The goal is to bring these forces together with the singular purpose of developing the best policy ideas that support the achievement and health of every student.

P-16 Councils are NOT policy-making bodies and have no enforcement authority, but instead serve as the public voice on what policies could be adopted and/or enforced to help improve education. P-16 Council members serve as liaisons to all facets of the community so that the best ideas can bubble up from within for tackling school's most pressing challenges. At the same time, P-16 Councils are meant to relay information to the broader public. They should collect data from the local schools to help inform everyone about performance so that success can be celebrated and weaknesses can be addressed early on. The goal of P-16 Councils is not to dilute the authority of districts, but to broaden the pool of good ideas and innovative solutions and to engage communities in the process of supporting their children and schools. Countless studies have shown that the level of family and parent engagement in a child's education is directly and positively correlated with a child's achievement and success in school. P-16 Councils are yet another mechanism by which children in Mississippi can benefit from parent and community involvement.

Rules and Regulations Governing P-16 Councils

The formation of P-16 Councils is mandated by the Mississippi State Board of Education through Accreditation Standard 18 for any school district that has been designated as Failing AND for any district and/or school that has been designated below the level of Successful by the State Board of Education. In order to meet accreditation requirements, any district or school that falls into the aforementioned categories must have a P-16 Council.

Furthermore, the Mississippi State Board of Education has guided districts to utilize the *Pilot Guidelines for P-16 Councils* that was developed by the Mississippi Department of Education as a base-line for how to develop P-16 Councils. The contents of this P-16 Guide serve as further clarification to the Pilot Guidelines and provides step by step guidance related to P-16 formation.

Below is a direct snippet of the State guidelines:

Standard 12.

There is an organized system to encourage community involvement, parental communication, and business partnerships in school district decision-making. {MS Code § 37-7-337} (Districts Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance are exempted.)

12.1 A school district that has been designated as Failing (F) as defined by the State Board of Education shall establish a community-based pre-kindergarten through higher education (P-16) council. {MS Code § 37-18-5(4)}

12.2 A district and/or a school designated as a D or F shall establish a community-based pre-kindergarten through higher education (P-16) council.

What is policy?

P-16 Councils are to primarily focus on developing policy recommendations for the school district and/or school that will solve the challenges that the local district or school is facing. P-16 Councils may suggest the creation of new policies to fill what they deem to be existing voids, the enforcement of existing policies, the tweaking or replacement of existing policies, and the retraction of ineffective policies.

A policy, according to Merriam Webster's Dictionary is defined as "a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions." More specifically, a policy is "a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body."

In other words, policies are the guiding principles that schools and districts follow to ensure the successful academic achievement of their children. For example, schools and districts have health policies that dictate their goals for having healthy students and provide a course of action for ensuring that students are successful. Another example of policy is principal, administrative, and staff hiring policy. To be clear, personnel matters dealing with specific existing employees are not a matter of policy. However, policies that are legitimately within the realm of the P-16 Council's purview do include things like district policies around the hiring of staff for certain positions. For example, a P-16 Council should give its advice on what qualifications should be sought after when looking to hire a principal or teacher in addition to the traditional state mandated requirements.

Overview of the P-16 Council Development Process

The P-16 Council Development Process can at times seem overwhelming, but if the instructions are followed precisely, it can be a clean and rewarding process. The Process has been broken down into three stages that each have very specific requirements and outcomes. The diagram below provides a high level summary of each Stage. The remainder of this document provides a deeper explanation of and recommendations for how each stage should be carried out.

Stage 1: P-16 Initiators Meeting



- ☐ District and Community Representatives Meet
- ☐ P-16 Mission Statement Developed
- ☐ Agreement developed on number of representatives from each category
- ☐ Public Meeting Date, Time, and Location is Determined and Publicized

Stage 2: P-16 Selection Meeting



- ☐ Community Members from all P-16 Categories Meet Together
- ☐ Community is briefed on P-16 Purpose and Rules
- ☐ Community Members Split into the 6 Categories
- ☐ Members in each Category Select Their Representatives for the P-16 Council

Stage 3: P-16 Formation Meeting



- ☐ Category Representatives Meet as Newly Independent P-16 Council
- ☐ P-16 Members Select Officers
- ☐ P-16 Council Selects Date of Next P-16 Meeting
- ☐ P-16 Members Seek Introduction at Next School Board Meeting

(See Appendix B for a Reproducible Version of the P-16 Council Development Process Checklist)

Initiating the P-16 Process: Stage 1

While the P-16 Council process has been intentionally developed to allow for local input into its methods so that it can properly serve each unique community, the Mississippi Department of Education has established a very clear process by which the Council should be formed. This initial step of formation is one of the most important pieces, as any council that is improperly launched will face significant barriers to its success in the long-term. The first step is to establish an Initiators Group that consists of school district or school representatives and community representatives. This section will walk you through Stage One of creating a P-16 Council.

“Stage One: Representatives of the School District or School, working with members of the community, should serve as the Initiators to create the P-16 Council.”

Who should serve as representatives of the District or School and what members of the community should be worked with? These are two very important questions. (See Appendix C for Choosing Initiators Checklist)

Choosing District/School Representatives to Serve as Initiators

For a P-16 Council to be successful, it will need the cooperation and input of school district or school staff at the very highest levels so that the entire district/school is on the same page as to how the Council is being put together. The last thing a district needs is for there to be internal bickering over how the Council was created. The superintendent of the district in addition to at least two staff designees should represent the district. This will not only ensure that the District supports the process, but will ensure that community representatives see that the District takes the P-16 Council seriously.

The additional staff designees ought to be people that are expected to serve as a liaison from the District to the P-16 Council once it is formed. Potential designees should include Parent Liaisons, Title I Coordinators, Principals, etc. since these are individuals that already interact frequently with parents and have decision-making authority in the district/school with regard to parent involvement.

Choosing Community Representatives to Serve as Initiators

Just as choosing district/school Initiators is vitally important, getting the right community members on board can be equally important. Choosing a group that is authentically representing the community is of the utmost importance. An Initiators group that consists of school officials and people that are friends of the school officials is far more likely to meet harsh criticism and fail than one that includes many perspectives and groups of people. Community representatives should not be school or district employees.

Create a group of 3-6 community members that can serve as representatives of the community in the Initiators process.

Tips for Who to Include:

1. Look for a broad range of people that can provide varying perspectives, and make sure to include the voice of people that are generally critical of what is occurring in the district/school.

This will provide the needed transparency that will eliminate potential community misgivings about the process.

2. Include traditional and non-traditional community leaders. While traditional leaders are easy to find (i.e. mayors, alderman, pastors, etc.), a bit of leg work must be done to reach out to non-traditional leaders.
 - a. To find non-traditional leaders, look for people in the community that people turn to for advice or support.
 - b. Ask around the schools (especially from school secretaries and other front-line workers) for particularly active parents and guardians that provide lots of support and input into school, children, and community activities.
 - c. Reach out to local community organizations that do work in your community and ask for suggestions.
 - d. Make a public announcement asking for anyone interested in being an Initiator to contact the school district.

The Initiators Meeting

Once a school district and community have established an Initiators Group, the Initiators Group should determine a mutually acceptable time for an initial Initiators Meeting.

Below is a sample Agenda for the Initiators Meeting (See Appendix D for Reproducible Format)

Sample Agenda for Initiators Meeting

Welcome / Introduction of Purpose

Introduction of Initiators Group Members & Why Each Is A Part of the Group

Development of P-16 Mission Statement

P-16 Council Membership Requirements

Determination of the Number of persons to Sit on the P-16 Council

Establishment of a Date/Time/Location for a Public Meeting

Welcome / Introduction of Purpose

The purpose of the Initiators Meeting is to establish the ground rules for a P-16 Community Engagement Council. The Introduction should include a discussion of the state law around P-16 Council formation and should also provide a copy of the Pilot Guidelines for each Initiator.

Introduction of Initiators Group Members & Why Each Is a Part of the Group

This section is self-explanatory. Have each group member go around the table and introduce themselves and why they are interested in the formation of a P-16 Council.

Development of P-16 Mission Statement

One of the key parts of the Initiators Meeting is for members to agree upon a mission statement for the P-16 Council. The mission statement ought to provide a clear guide to future members on the purpose of the P-16 Council and why it is being formed.

According to the Pilot Guidelines: *“The Initiators shall agree upon a Mission Statement for the P-16 Council that focuses on the need to create healthy schools and healthy communities, noting that healthy schools are a pre-condition to sustaining healthy communities.”*

Here is a sample Mission Statement: (Also provided in Appendix E)

The Mission of the <Insert School District or School Name> P-16 (Pre-Kindergarten through College) Community Engagement Council is to:

- 1. Provide a safe space and mechanism for community input in the <Insert School District or School Name> decision making process,*
- 2. Assist in the dissemination of data and information from <Insert School District or School Name> to the general public,*
- 3. Help coordinate the transmission of community priorities, needs, and opinions to the <Insert School District or School Name> Administration (and Board of Trustees), and*
- 4. Develop accurate assessments of the strengths and limitations of the <Insert School District or School Name> in order to recommend effective approaches to creating quality, healthy, and safe schools.*

P-16 Council Membership Requirements

The Initiators should explore the requirements of P-16 Council Membership as laid out in the pilot guidelines. The following is directly from the pilot guidelines and is in a printable format in Appendix F:

“The Councils shall have participation from a broad-section of the community, with a special emphasis on the inclusion of parents and students who are the primary constituents of any school district and school. Participation should be shared among these six (6) constituent categories, which are broad enough to encompass and represent the widest range of interests.

- 1. Members of local community-based organizations working on public education issues within the local school district;*
- 2. Members of local public school district Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations;*
- 3. Members of local public school-based student councils and local public school student government associations;*
- 4. Community leaders, public officials and members of the business community, all within the local school district;*

5. Community members *at large* interested in public education issues who may or may not be part of the other four (4) categories. In a school district wide Council there should be one *at large* member to represent each school board election district or ward; and
6. A. For *School District-based Councils*: members of the School District, which should be selected from the School District Board of Trustees, the School District Administration, the School District Faculty, and School District staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
B. For *Individual School-based Councils*: members of the Individual School, which should be selected from the School Administration, the School Faculty, and School staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

Persons who are employed by the local school district at the time of these proceedings are expressly excluded from the definition of membership in each of the first five (5) constituent categories, 1-5, as set forth above, but are included in category 6.

While the Pilot Guidelines are very specific as to the 6 constituent categories, some key points must be highlighted:

- A key point to remember is that any person that is employed by the school district, meaning that they are drawing a check from the district for any type of work, CANNOT be placed into any category other than category 6.
- Many people will fall into multiple categories. In the section on Stage Two, this document will touch on how to assist people in determining their category.

An additional note for P-16 membership is that a P-16 Council with a broad set of backgrounds and expertise within the categories will be much stronger because it will have a broader pool of knowledge and experience from which to develop policy solutions. Furthermore, given the importance of having an aligned system from early childhood through higher education to the success of students, the P-16 Council ought to have member representation from across the Pre-K through higher education spectrum such that recommendations of the P-16 Council will naturally take into account the needs of students at every level of their education. Depending on the school district or school's location, seek out representatives from the local Head Start and/or daycares, nearby community colleges or universities, and service providers and parents all across the spectrum.

Determination of the Number of persons to sit on the P-16 Council

The next step for the Initiators will be to determine the initial number of P-16 members.

“The Initiators shall determine the *initial* number of persons to sit on the P-16 Council and the equitable distribution of the membership among the categories. Once the Council is formed, the Council shall have the right to increase the membership in the Council.”

The Pilot Guidelines provide the following guidance on council size:

- The number of Council members should be based on the size of the school district or the size of the individual school.
- The *minimum* number for the smallest districts or schools should be 12 people.
- The *minimum* number for the largest districts or schools should be 24 people.

There is no specific guidance on what constitutes a large or a small district or school. As such, the Initiators should use their own judgment to determine their school district size and thus the minimum number of people for the P-16 Council.

While it is important to ensure that the P-16 Council is representative of the community, having too many people on the council can result in ineffectiveness unless additional measures are taken to meet in smaller sub-groups. Another important note is that “equitable distribution of membership among the categories” does not necessarily mean the same number of participants from each category. It could just as easily be equitable to provide for more Parent and Student representatives since they are the primary constituent of the local schools. The determination of what is an equitable distribution should be made by the Initiators to fit local needs. Also keep in mind that once the P-16 Council is formed, its members may self-correct for the need for additional members or constituent groups by adding additional members, so do not be worried about getting the composition “right” up front.

Establishment of a Date/Time/Location for a Public Meeting

The next step will be for the Initiators to determine a date, time, and location for a public meeting to organize the P-16 Council.

“The Initiators shall call a public meeting at a time and place which is convenient for a substantial cross-section of the community to attend. This public meeting shall NOT be held during or at the same time as a regularly scheduled school district board meeting or school meeting at the school level. This restriction shall apply only to the initial meeting of the Council.

Prior to the initial meeting the Initiators shall provide copies of the Mission Statement to the public so that the public will know why it is important to come to the Council and to participate in the Council.”

Per the instructions in the Pilot Guidelines, be sure to schedule the public meeting in a manner that makes it accessible to most people and does not leave out particular segments of the community. For example, holding the meeting at the same time as a local city board meeting or Chamber of Commerce meeting would preclude members from those two sectors from participating. Furthermore, ensuring that flyers and other announcements are posted publicly and conveyed in many forms (print, word of mouth, posters, church announcements, mailings, etc.) is important to reaching every constituent group for the P-16 Council development meeting. Finally, be sure to provide the Mission Statement on all flyers and informational materials so that the public knows the P-16 Council purpose. (See Appendix G for sample publicity materials)

Selecting P-16 Council Members: Stage 2

The Public Meeting at which community members learn more about the Council and engaged in developing their own council is fundamentally important to the Council's long-term success. The key to success will be to explain the P-16 Council in a thorough and clear manner that all community members can understand. Keep jargon to a minimum since those present often will not have a background in education. Also, be sure to utilize multiple forms of communication in order to reach people with difficulty accessing print materials and for those with limited English language proficiency.

In the Stage 2 Appendix at the end of this publication you will find sign-in sheets, group table tents, a sample agenda, and a variety of day of logistics pieces. The following will describe the various aspects of the Stage 2 Meeting.

Who Should Run the Stage 2 Meeting

The P-16 Council Initiators Group should select a well-respected member of the Initiators group that can deliver an unbiased message about the role and purpose of the P-16 Council. The person selected should be able to speak clearly and answer questions about the P-16 Materials that are provided and must be able to distance him or herself from advocating for any particular outcomes regarding the P-16 Council. Alternatively, the Initiators group can seek an independent 3rd party to facilitate the Stage 2 Meeting keeping in mind that third party individuals must have a solid understanding of the entire P-16 Council development process.

A key point to remember is that once the Stage 2 meeting breaks into its subgroups for the subgroups to select their P-16 representatives, members of the Initiators group can become participants in the process and join the subgroups in their respective category.

Sample Agenda with Explanations

An agenda with clearly established timeframes is imperative to the success of the Stage 2 Meeting because a meeting that is too lengthy can cause people to lose interest and disinvest themselves from the process. Below is a sample agenda. The red text is special notes for the facilitator and is not printed as part of the public agenda. A clean Sample Agenda copy along with sign in sheets and relevant materials is provided in Appendix H.

Sample Agenda Items P-16 Community Engagement Council Stage 2 Formation Meeting 6:15pm-7:30pm

- ☐ Call to Order 6:15pm
- ☐ Introductions
 - Superintendent—Welcome from the District
 - Neutral Initiator or 3rd Party Individual—Welcome on Behalf of the Initiators Group
- ☐ P-16 Council Laws & Regulations 6:20pm **(Led by the Initiator selected or the 3rd party facilitator)**
 - Law Establishing P-16 Council **(Provide copies of the P-16 Law. Read the law to attendees. See Appendix I.)**
 - Purpose of P-16 Council **(See Appendix J for a statement of purpose from MDE)**
 - Sharing of the P-16 Council Mission Statement **(Provide copies of the Mission Statement. Read the mission statement to attendees.)**
 - Responsibility of P-16 Council Members **(Pass out handout on P-16 Council Member Responsibility [provided in Appendix K] and lead attendees through the responsibilities)**

- Who Can Serve on the P-16 Council (Discuss the 6 constituent categories and provide examples of who could fall into each. Be sure to remind individuals that if they fit into more than one category they may choose which category they would like to serve in [except for school or district employees who must serve in category 6] Further information is provided in Appendix L.)
 - Question and Answer Session Regarding P-16 Information 6:30pm
 - Break Into the Six (6) Categories 6:45pm (If a person fits into more than one category, have him/her pick whichever he/she feels most strongly about. Insert the number of people for each category based on the numbers agreed upon by the Initiators group)
 - 1. Community Organizations that Support Education (ex: Insert Names of Some Local Organizations) [<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY> MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL]
 - 2. PTO Members (members from the parent-teacher organizations from all three schools) [<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL]
 - 3. Student Council Members (students that are members of the school-based student governments/councils) [<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL]
 - 4. Community Leaders (Mayors, City Officials, Business Owners, Preachers/Pastors, Etc.) [<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL]
 - 5. Community Members at Large (People who live in the School District. One person from each school board voting district must be represented). [<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL]
 - 6. School District Personnel (Anyone that is paid directly by <INSERT NAME> School District) [<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL]
 - Select Category Representatives 6:55pm
 - Within each category, anyone that wants to serve as a category representative should briefly express why they want to be the representative.
 - Making the Decision (two options):
 - Consensus: If everyone agrees on their representatives then those people will be made the category representatives.
 - Secret Ballot: If the group cannot reach an agreement on who should represent them, then we will conduct a vote a secret ballot to choose the representatives. The 3rd Party Individual or Neutral Initiator will be responsible for conducting the secret ballot and tallying the votes. (See Appendix M for Printable Secret Ballots)
- (What should be done if seats representative seats remain open at the end of this process? If the Stage 2 meeting advertisements have been done correctly, you should have enough people to fill the council seats. However, there are two potential scenarios:
- Scenario 1: More than half of the P-16 Council Seats are filled
If more than half of the seats are filled, then the filling of the remainder of the seats will be up to the newly elected P-16 members. The council should develop a method for finding good representatives to fill those seats.
 - Scenario 2: Less than half of the P-16 Council Seats are filled
If less than half of the P-16 Council Seats are filled, then the Stage 2 process has not occurred properly. At this point, there should be another Stage 2 meeting, with greater emphasis on inviting community members to ensure a large crowd of interested participants that are willing to be on the P-16 Council.)

Once each group has selected its representatives, by the instruction of the Pilot Guidelines, “the role of the Initiators ends and the new members take responsibility for the conduct of the P-16 Council.” [STAGE 3 BEGINS HERE](#)

- ☐ **P-16 Council Meeting 7:10pm-7:25pm [See Appendix N for Sign-In Sheet and Other Stage 3 Materials]**
 - ☐ Representatives from each category will come forward and convene the first P-16 Council Meeting. **The facilitator should create an area within the same room where the P-16 Council members can meet and have their first meeting observed by all those present.**
 - ☐ Category representatives will nominate members for President, Vice President, and Secretary.
 - ☐ P-16 Council will select a 2nd Meeting Date/Time/Location to be set prior to the next school board meeting so that P-16 Council Members can be introduced at the school board meeting. See Appendix O for Sample P-16 Meeting Announcement.
- ☐ **Meeting Closing and Adjournment 7:25-7:30pm**

The P-16 Council: Stage 3

Though it may seem strange for the Stage 3 meeting to occur immediately following the Stage 2 finalization of the P-16 members, it ensures the immediate independence and start of the P-16 Council.

The Stage 3 meeting should be brief and should be used for the council to select its officers (President, Vice President, and Secretary), exchange contact information, and to determine the next P-16 Council meeting date. At the point where the Stage 3 meeting begins, the P-16 Council officially becomes an organization that is **independent** of the local school district and/or school.

What does independence mean? Independence means that the P-16 Council is no longer operating under the auspices of the Initiators Group or the School District. As such, the Council takes direction from its internal leadership structure and any third party support that it seeks out. While the general public, including school officials that are not on the P-16 Council, may be present at the public meetings of the P-16 Council, the Council members have the sole authority to determine council policies, meeting locations and frequency, and structure of the individual meetings. Anyone wishing to speak must request to be placed on the agenda or speak within the rules of any public comment period if the Council creates a public comment portion. Furthermore, the composition of the council and its continuation will be determined by the individuals on the P-16 Council. A school district or school may not shut down a P-16 Council as it is the authority of the independent P-16 Council to make any determinations regarding its composition or existence.

The final role of the Initiators in the transfer process is to notify the P-16 Council members that, per the guidance of the P-16 Pilot Guidelines, training and technical assistance are available and encouraged and that they may contact the Mississippi Department of Education for a list of providers.

Important Notes on Intent for the Initiators, School District & School Administration, and the P-16 Council

The following section presents important notes on the intent of the P-16 Council guidelines and law that are critical to the spirit and success of the P-16 Council. For P-16 Councils to successfully improve education for all children, all of the groups involved must abide by the letter and spirit of the guidelines.

To the Initiators

The goal of the Initiators is to create the environment for the fair and legitimate development of a representative P-16 Council. The utmost care must be taken to be transparent and thoughtful in the Initiator deliberations, the location and time of the Stage 2 meeting, and the publicity surrounding the P-16 Council. The Initiators do not have any mandated authority to choose individuals for the P-16 Council or to attempt to sway the public as to who to put on the P-16 Council. In other words, Initiators should not attempt to “pack” the Stage 2 meeting with people they enjoy the support of, but instead should seek the broadest representation of the community possible. The genuine selection of representatives to the P-16 Council by members of each category is critical to the ultimate success of the P-16 Council. In the end, the P-16 Council, no matter its composition, must be comprised of people with the community support to make a positive impact on the school district and/or school.

To the Superintendent, School Board, and School Administrators

The P-16 Council is an independent organization that is mandated to assist the school district in ways that may not initially be comfortable for districts where such a parent and community partnership is new or underdeveloped. You must work with the P-16 Council to provide data and information related to key P-16 policy areas including, but not limited to, district policies, updated student achievement data (any student identifiers should be removed), student discipline, etc. The P-16 Council ought to be seen as a partner in developing solutions to the most pressing needs of the District. Attempting to unduly influence the P-16 Council’s policy suggestions cannot be tolerated as it undermines any positive community support that will come about as a result of the P-16 Council.

The P-16 Council has the authority to determine its own priorities after examining the strengths and limitations of the local school district or school for itself. The Superintendent, School Board, and/or building Principals do not have the authority to change a P-16 Council’s agenda, to move meetings or meeting times, or to otherwise attempt to dominate the P-16 Council or its members. Any attempts at marginalizing a P-16 Council or creating rifts between the P-16 Council and the school district or school is useless and only harms the children in the end.

While the district/school has a mandated obligation to release data on achievement, discipline, attendance, and other areas to the P-16 Council upon written request, the P-16 Council also has a responsibility to reveal any information, data, and policy ideas to the public that is served by the school district and/or school that it is supporting. The more the public knows about their schools, the more it will be able to support positive efforts for the school children. The transparency created by the P-16 Council will ultimately assist the school district/school in garnering the public support and input that will be needed to bring schools back to a successful status.

It is important to truly take into consideration the policy recommendations and suggestions that the P-16 Council brings forward to the district/school, as they will provide valuable positive ideas. School boards, superintendents, and principals should consider the recommendations of the P-16 Council and to respond to them with updates on actions taken as a result of the recommendations. In short, it is to the benefit of school boards, superintendents, and principals to develop a cordial and collaborative partnership with the local P-16 Council as all are on the same team in support of the success of all children.

To the Members of the P-16 Council

The P-16 Council is mandated to support the school district/school by providing ideas, partnerships, and information that can help the schools succeed. The P-16 Council does not have any mandating or enforcement authority. The P-16 Council may suggest policy and actions to the school district or school administration, but does not have the authority to make the changes. In other words, a P-16 Council is NOT another school board. The P-16 Council is also not a place for politics, as politics only serve to harm the most vulnerable children. Individuals seeking to use the P-16 Council as a platform for other political aims that do not help children ought to seriously reconsider their membership on the council.

The P-16 Council Members have an obligation to examine existing policy and to advocate for the enforcement of policies that are good for children. Furthermore, P-16 Councils are meant to focus on policy issues and, unlike parent organizations, are not supposed to conduct direct programs or projects. For example, the role of the P-16 Council is not to go out and paint school buildings or plant flower beds (though individuals may do this in volunteer efforts), it is to suggest policies that will improve the academic performance of the children. The P-16 Council must take its mandate seriously and use its authority to seek information and provide recommendations judiciously. It must serve as a genuine mouthpiece for the greater good and all its actions should focus on the success of the children of the school district.

Conclusion

The establishment of a P-16 Council is a challenging, but ultimately rewarding, process. If great care and consideration are taken in the development of a P-16 Council, then it will be a body that will provide invaluable local opinions and ideas regarding policies that will help children succeed. This guide should be used as a resource throughout the P-16 Council development process and should be used as a strong supplement to the P-16 Council Pilot Guidelines.

In the appendices of this document there are valuable resources that have been formatted to allow for easy use and copying so that districts/schools can focus on the task of developing the council rather than the agenda development process. Any further questions about P-16 Council development can be directed to the Mississippi Department of Education and/or the Center for Education Innovation's Community Engagement Team. For additional information and trainings for P-16 Council development or for ongoing professional development of P-16 Council members, please contact The Center for Education Innovation at 601-354-3356.

Appendix

Appendix A: Pilot Guidelines (Direct Copy of MDE Pilot Guidelines)

Pilot Guidelines for P-16 Community Engagement Councils

Mission

School Districts and schools have the duty and responsibility to build quality first-rate schools accessible to all children regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability or status. This requires meaningful participation of parents, students and other parts of the community in the formation and implementation of policy at the school district and school levels.

Community Engagement Councils, also known as P-16 Councils, are an essential opportunity to build this process. The Community Engagement Councils are intended to be community-based and independent. The Councils are charged with the duty and responsibility to build strong, healthy communities. In order to build strong, healthy communities it is necessary, among other things, to create a quality public education delivered to students in healthy schools which are accessible to all children, regardless of race, class, status, gender or disability. Since these goals cannot be achieved within a year or two the Councils will need to develop a “comprehensive plan” that attempts to answer these two questions:

- A. “What will a strong, healthy community, rooted in a quality public education system, need to look like 10, 15 or 20 years from now?”
- B. “What do we have to do this year, next year and the years that follow in order to build this process in the right direction?”

Membership in the Councils

The Councils shall have participation from a broad-section of the community, with a special emphasis on the inclusion of parents and students who are the primary constituents of any school district and school. Participation should be shared among these six (6) constituent categories, which are broad enough to encompass and represent the widest range of interests:

1. Members of local community-based organizations working on public education issues within the local school district;
2. Members of local public school district Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations;
3. Members of local public school-based student councils and local public school student government associations;
4. Community leaders, public officials and members of the business community, all within the local school district;
5. Community members *at large* interested in public education issues who may or may not be part of the other four (4) categories. In a school district wide Council there should be one *at large* member to represent each school board election district or ward; and
6.
 - a. For *School District-based Councils*: members of the School District, which should be selected from the School District Board of Trustees, the School District Administration, the School District Faculty, and School District staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
 - b. For *Individual School-based Councils*: members of the Individual School, which should be selected from the School Administration, the School Faculty, and School staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

Persons who are **employed** by the local school district at the time of these proceedings are expressly **excluded** from the definition of membership in each of the first five (5) constituent categories, **1 – 5**, as set forth above, but are included in category **6**.

Student members of the Councils must be at least 12 years of age.

P-16 Council Participation

Smaller school districts may elect to have a single district-wide Council. Larger school districts may elect to have individual school-based Councils.

The number of Council members should be based on the size of the school district or the size of the individual school. The *minimum* number for the smallest districts or schools should be 12 persons, and the *minimum* for the largest districts or schools should be 24.

P-16 Council Membership Selection

There are 3 stages to the process for the selection of sitting members of the P-16 Councils.

Stage One: Representatives of the School District or School, working with members of the community, should serve as the Initiators to create the P-16 Council. **Items A through D of Stage One set forth below apply *only* to the initial meeting of the P-16 Council.**

- A. The Initiators shall agree upon a Mission Statement for the P-16 Council that focuses on the need to create healthy schools and healthy communities, noting that healthy schools are a pre-condition to sustaining healthy communities.
- B. The Initiators shall determine the *initial* number of persons to sit on the P-16 Council and the equitable distribution of the membership among the categories. Once the Council is formed the Council shall have the right to increase the membership in the Council.
- C. The Initiators *shall call a public meeting* at a time and place which is convenient for a substantial cross-section of the community to attend. This public meeting shall NOT be held during or at the same time as a regularly scheduled school district board meeting or school meeting at the school level. This restriction shall apply *only* to the initial meeting of the Council.
- D. *Prior to the initial meeting* the Initiators shall provide copies of the Mission Statement to the public so that the public will know why it is important to come to the Council and to participate in the Council.

Stage Two: The selection of the P-16 Council members

- A. At the first meeting participants should divide themselves into groups based on the categories as set forth in the Membership section of this document.
- B. In these groups the participants shall select from among themselves the number of members as previously determined by the Initiators. Initiators may participate in the groups based on the six (6) categories and are eligible to be selected as individuals on the same basis as any other person. The selection process within each group preferably shall be by consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved then a vote shall be taken by written secret ballot.
- C. When all of the members have been selected the role of the Initiators ends and the new members take responsibility for the conduct of the P-16 Council.

Stage Three: The P-16 Council becomes an independent organization

- A. At this point the Council becomes independent of the local school district or school.
- B. The Initiators shall let the P-16 Council know that training and technical assistance is available. The Mississippi Department of Education may be contacted for a list of possible providers.
- C. The Council is strongly encouraged to participate in training.

Core Values of P-16 Community Engagement Councils

- A. The Council shall hold open meetings on dates, times and places accessible to the broad spectrum of education stakeholders and others in the community;
- B. The Council shall have a governance structure that is democratic and seeks, to the extent possible, to build consensus to carry out the work of the Council;
- C. The Council shall be independent of the local school district and each of its schools, and shall have a perspective in working to build strong, healthy communities that is broader than the school system itself.
- D. The authority of the Council to fulfill its mission stems from state statutes and Accreditation Standard 18. The authority of the Council does not extend to the management or operation of the school district or individual schools.
- E. The Council shall have the capacity to create working committees that may include members of the community to assist Council members;
- F. The Council is responsible for making accurate assessments of the strengths and limitations of the school district and its schools as a basis for recommending effective approaches to create quality, healthy schools;
- G. The Council needs to understand how to gather relevant data and how to utilize the data to monitor and evaluate the schools and school district; and,
- H. The Council, upon written request, shall have the authority to request and obtain data from the school district and the individual schools, so long as the content of the data sought does not compromise any existing Federal or State privacy law.

Appendix B: P-16 Council Development Process Checklist

Stage 1: P-16 Initiators Meeting	Stage 2: P-16 Selection Meeting	Stage 3: P-16 Formation Meeting
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> District and Community Representatives Meet	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Members from all P-16 Categories Meet Together	<input type="checkbox"/> Category Representatives Meet as Newly Independent P-16 Council
<input type="checkbox"/> P-16 Mission Statement Developed	<input type="checkbox"/> Community is briefed on P-16 Purpose and Rules	<input type="checkbox"/> P-16 Members Select Officers
<input type="checkbox"/> Agreement developed on number of representatives from each category	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Members Split into the 6 Categories	<input type="checkbox"/> P-16 Council Selects Date of Next P-16 Meeting
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Meeting Date, Time, and Location is Determined and Publicized	<input type="checkbox"/> Members in each Category Select Their Representatives for the P-16 Council	<input type="checkbox"/> P-16 Members Seek Introduction at Next School Board Meeting

Appendix C: Choosing Initiators Checklist

Choosing School District and School Personnel to Serve as Initiators

Goal: To choose a group of 3-4 individuals that can represent the school district or school as Initiators in the P-16 Council Process.

People to Include:

- ☐ Superintendent
- ☐ Principal (If creating a School P-16 Council)
- ☐ Staff Designee #1
- ☐ Staff Designee #2

Qualities to look for in Staff Designees:

- ☐ Does he/she already have frequent interaction with parents and community members (examples: parent Liaisons, Title I Coordinators, Principals, teachers with strong parent contact systems, etc.)?
- ☐ Does he/she have decision-making authority in the district/school with regard to parent involvement?
- ☐ Does he/she have a strong, positive reputation within the community?
- ☐ Does he/she have a strong commitment to involving parents/community members in making schools successful?
- ☐ Does he/she have a genuine interest in the improvement of the school district or school?

Choosing Community Representatives to Serve as Initiators

Goal: To choose a group of 3-6 community members that can serve as representatives of the community in the Initiators process.

People to Include:

- ☐ Concerned Parents
- ☐ At least one person or representative from an organization that is critical of the school or school district
- ☐ Representatives from Local Community Organizations that promote public service, education, youth development, etc.
- ☐ Traditional Community Leaders (Mayor, Alderman, Pastor)
- ☐ Non-traditional Leaders
 - Active/Involved Parents
 - Community Members that Support Public Education



Appendix D: Sample Agenda for Initiators Meeting

P-16 Council Initiators Meeting Agenda

<Insert Location>

<Insert Date>

Welcome / Introduction of Purpose

Introduction of Initiators Group Members & Why Each Is A Part of the Group

Development of P-16 Mission Statement

P-16 Council Membership Requirements

Determination of the Number of persons to sit on the P-16 Council

Establishment of a Date/Time/Location for a Public Meeting

Appendix E: Sample Mission Statement for P-16 Council

The Mission of the <Insert School District or School Name> P-16 (Pre-Kindergarten through College) Community Engagement Council is to:

- 1. Provide a safe space and mechanism for community input in the <Insert School District or School Name> decision making process,*
- 2. Assist in the dissemination of data and information from <Insert School District or School Name> to the general public,*
- 3. Help coordinate the transmission of community priorities, needs, and opinions to the <Insert School District or School Name> Administration (and Board of Trustees), and*
- 4. Develop accurate assessments of the strengths and limitations of the <Insert School District or School Name> in order to recommend effective approaches to creating quality, healthy, and safe schools.*

Appendix F: P-16 Council Membership Requirements (Taken Verbatim from MDE Pilot Guidelines)

Membership in the Councils

The Councils shall have participation from a broad-section of the community, with a special emphasis on the inclusion of parents and students who are the primary constituents of any school district and school. Participation should be shared among these six (6) constituent categories, which are broad enough to encompass and represent the widest range of interests:

1. Members of local community-based organizations working on public education issues within the local school district;
2. Members of local public school district Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations;
3. Members of local public school-based student councils and local public school student government associations;
4. Community leaders, public officials and members of the business community, all within the local school district;
5. Community members *at large* interested in public education issues who may or may not be part of the other four (4) categories. In a school district wide Council there should be one *at large* member to represent each school board election district or ward; and
6.
 - a. For *School District-based Councils*: members of the School District, which should be selected from the School District Board of Trustees, the School District Administration, the School District Faculty, and School District staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
 - b. For *Individual School-based Councils*: members of the Individual School, which should be selected from the School Administration, the School Faculty, and School staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

Persons who are *employed* by the local school district at the time of these proceedings are expressly **excluded** from the definition of membership in each of the first five (5) constituent categories, **1 – 5**, as set forth above, but are included in category **6**.

Student members of the Councils must be at least 12 years of age.

Appendix G: Public Meeting Sample Publicity Flyer

URGENT! YOU ARE NEEDED! URGENT!

The Mississippi Department of Education has mandated that X School District creates a P-16 (Pre-Kindergarten through College) Community Engagement Council.

The P-16 Council will give the community voice through policy recommendations to our school district so that we have a great education for all our students.

Why? Come out to help select who will represent you on the P-16 Council to support our children.

Who? YOU (parent, community member, business owner, faith leader, student, and concerned citizen)

What? P-16 Community Engagement Council

Where? LOCATION

When? DAY OF WEEK, DATE, TIME

URGENT! DATE, TIME, LOCATION!

Appendix H: Sample Agenda and Materials for Stage 2 Meeting

P-16 Council Stage 2 Formation Meeting Agenda

<Insert Location>

<Insert Date>

6:15pm-7:30pm

- ☐ Call to Order 6:15pm
- ☐ Introductions
 - Superintendent—Welcome from the District
 - Neutral Initiator or 3rd Party Individual—Welcome on Behalf of the Initiators Group
- ☐ P-16 Council Laws & Regulations 6:20pm
 - Law Establishing P-16 Council
 - Purpose of P-16 Council
 - Sharing of the P-16 Council Mission Statement
 - Responsibility of P-16 Council Members
 - Who Can Serve on the P-16 Council
- ☐ Question and Answer Session Regarding P-16 Information 6:30pm
- ☐ Break Into the Six (6) Categories 6:45pm
 - 1. Community Organizations that Support Education (ex: Insert Names of Some Local Organizations) [**<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY> MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL**]
 - 2. PTO Members (members from the parent-teacher organizations from all three schools) [**<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL**]
 - 3. Student Council Members (students that are members of the school-based student governments/councils) [**<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL**]
 - 4. Community Leaders (Mayors, City Officials, Business Owners, Preachers/Pastors, Etc.) [**<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL**]
 - 5. Community Members at Large (People who live in the School District. One person from each school board voting district must be represented). [**<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL**]
 - 6. School District Personnel (Anyone that is paid directly by <INSERT NAME> School District) [**<INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR THIS CATEGORY > MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL**]
- ☐ Select Category Representatives 6:55pm
 - Within each category, anyone that wants to serve as a category representative should briefly express why they want to be the representative.
 - Making the Decision (two options):
 - Consensus: If everyone agrees on their representatives then those people will be made the category representatives.
 - Secret Ballot: If the group cannot reach an agreement on who should represent them, then we will conduct a vote a secret ballot to choose the representatives. The 3rd Party Individual or Neutral Initiator will be responsible for conducting the secret ballot and tallying the votes.
- ☐ P-16 Council Meeting 7:10pm-7:25pm



- Representatives from each category will come forward and convene the first P-16 Council Meeting.
 - Category representatives will nominate members for President, Vice President, and Secretary.
 - P-16 Council will select a 2nd Meeting Date/Time/Location to be set prior to the next school board meeting so that P-16 Council Members can be introduced at the school board meeting. See Appendix O for Sample P-16 Meeting Announcement.
- ☐ Meeting Closing and Adjournment 7:25-7:30pm

SEE ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS FOR SIGN-IN SHEETS, GROUP NAME TAGS, ETC.

Appendix I: P-16 Council Law

Revisions to Standard 18 Proposed by the Office of School Improvement Approved by the State Board of Education July 14, 2011

18. There is an organized system to encourage community involvement, parental communication, and business partnerships in school district decision-making. {MS Code 37-7-337} **(Districts Meeting the Highest Levels of Performance are exempted.)**
- 18.1 ~~A school that has been designated as a school at risk shall establish a local parents/citizens advisory council. {MS Code 37-18-5(1)}~~ DELETED
- 18.2 A school district that has been designated as *Failing* as defined by the State Board of Education shall establish a community-based pre-kindergarten through higher education (P-16) council. {MS Code 37-18-5(4)}
- 18.3 A district and/or a school below the successful level shall establish a prekindergarten through higher education (P-16) council.

NOTE: Refer to the pilot edition of the *Guidelines for P-16 Community Engagement Council*.

Appendix J: P-16 Council Statement of Purpose

As provided by the MDE P-16 Pilot Guidelines, the following is a direct quote of the general purpose of P-16 Councils. This should be presented to all people present at the Stage 2 meeting so that everyone starts off on the same page with regards to what the Mississippi Department of Education intends a P-16 Council to be.

“School Districts and schools have the duty and responsibility to build quality first-rate schools accessible to all children regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability or status. This requires meaningful participation of parents, students and other parts of the community in the formation and implementation of policy at the school district and school levels.

Community Engagement Councils, also known as P-16 Councils, are an essential opportunity to build this process. The Community Engagement Councils are intended to be community-based and independent. The Councils are charged with the duty and responsibility to build strong, healthy communities. In order to build strong, healthy communities it is necessary, among other things, to create a quality public education delivered to students in healthy schools which are accessible to all children, regardless of race, class, status, gender or disability.”

--Quote from the MDE P-16 Pilot Guidelines

Appendix K: P-16 Council Member Responsibilities

Duties/Responsibilities of P-16 Council Members

As a <Insert School/District Name> P-16 Community Engagement Council Member you are responsible for faithfully carrying out the following duties and responsibilities.

- ☐ The best interest of children and students is your primary interest as a member of the P-16 Council.
- ☐ You have a duty to help build a strong, healthy community and school district so that all students can fulfill their potential.
- ☐ You will attend mandatory Monthly/Quarterly P-16 Council Meetings (frequency, time, and location are determined by the P-16 Council Members)
- ☐ You must faithfully serve as the category representative, leaving out politics and self-interest, and you will make decisions that are in the best interest of district/school children.
- ☐ You are committed to the academic success of <Insert School/District Name> students.
- ☐ You must support the P-16 Council in making accurate, data-driven, assessments of the strengths and limitations of the school district AND help to recommend effective approaches to creating quality, healthy schools.
- ☐ You have a duty to attend P-16 Council Member training sessions that will provide professional development on how to gather and understand school data, how to use the data to make recommendations, and how to build effective recommendations.
- ☐ You understand that the duty of the P-16 Council is to provide recommendations to the school district that must be heard by the school district but may or may not be adopted. The P-16 Council DOES NOT operate the schools and cannot mandate changes.

Appendix L: Who Can Serve on the P-16 Council

The guidance below in black lettering is verbatim from the MDE P-16 Pilot Guidelines Document. In **red lettering** is supporting guidance provided by this guide.

Membership in the Councils

The Councils shall have participation from a broad-section of the community, with a special emphasis on the inclusion of parents and students who are the primary constituents of any school district and school. Participation should be shared among these six (6) constituent categories, which are broad enough to encompass and represent the widest range of interests:

1. Members of local community-based organizations working on public education issues within the local school district;
Examples of local organizations include: Afterschool program providers, advocacy organizations, student mentoring programs, community-based parent organizations, local planning commissions that have education goals, etc.
2. Members of local public school district Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations;
3. Members of local public school-based student councils and local public school student government associations;
If a school or district does not have a school-based student council or student government association, then look for students in other school-based student groups that would properly represent the views of students within the school or district.
4. Community leaders, public officials and members of the business community, all within the local school district;
Variety is important to success in this category. In other words, having all business leaders or all public officials is less useful than having a mix of both in order to ensure that a broader segment of the population is consulted and has a stake in the success of the P-16 Council.
5. Community members *at large* interested in public education issues who may or may not be part of the other four (4) categories. In a school district wide Council there should be one *at large* member to represent each school board election district or ward; and
At large community members should include non-traditional local leaders, such as highly active neighborhood representatives. These at large members can also include Pastors of local congregations, parents, and other community members that may or may not fall under the first four categories.
6.
 - a. For *School District-based Councils*: members of the School District, which should be selected from the School District Board of Trustees, the School District Administration, the School District Faculty, and School District staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
 - b. For *Individual School-based Councils*: members of the Individual School, which should be selected from the School Administration, the School Faculty, and School staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
School and school district council representatives should be individuals that have a vested interest in ensuring strong parent and community involvement in the schools. They should also be people that are trusted in the community and are listened to within the school or school district so that they can relay important information in both directions.

Persons who are **employed** by the local school district at the time of these proceedings are expressly **excluded** from the definition of membership in each of the first five (5) constituent categories, **1 – 5**, as set forth above, but are included in category **6**.

Student members of the Councils must be at least 12 years of age.



Appendix M: Printable Secret Ballot for

Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____
Category Representative Secret Ballot
Choice: _____



Appendix N: Stage 3 Sign-In Sheet

Welcome to the P-16 Meeting!



<DISTRICT NAME> P-16
Community Engagement Council

Name	Address	E-mail Address	Phone Number	Affiliation
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Appendix O: Sample P-16 Meeting Announcement

URGENT! YOU ARE NEEDED! URGENT!

The Mississippi Department of Education has mandated that our school district must create a P-16 (Pre-Kindergarten through College) Community Engagement Council.

The P-16 Council will give the community voice through policy recommendations to our school district so that we have a great education for all our students.

Why? Come out to help select who will represent you on the P-16 Council to support our children.

Who? YOU (parent, community member, business owner, faith leader, student, and concerned citizen)

What? P-16 Community Engagement Council

Where? INSERT LOCATION

When? INSERT DATE AND TIME

URGENT! Date, Time, Location

SPONSORED BY:

SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL DISTRICT PARENT CENTER

OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Appendix P: Request for Information Template

Request for Information Template

To: <Insert name of school district> School District Board of Trustees & Superintendent <Insert name of superintendent or conservator>

From: <Insert name of your P-16 Community Engagement Council>, Subcommittee on <Insert name of subcommittee>

Re: <Insert a one line request for information>

Date:

The <Insert name of Council> operates under the authority of the state statutes and Accreditation Standard 18 and the State Defined Pilot Guidelines for P-16 Councils to request data and information from the local school district in order to make accurate assessments of the strengths and limitations of the school district as a basis for recommending effective approaches to create quality schools.

More specifically, the P-16 Council is requesting:

- _____
- _____
- _____

We are requesting the above information <Insert reason here>

The P-16 Council is requesting a waiver of all fees in that the disclosure of the requested information is part of the P-16 Council's duties, is in the public interest and will contribute significantly to the public's understanding of parent engagement policies and Title I funding in our district.

Please reply to <Insert name of P-16 Contact Person> at <Insert Phone #, mailing address, and e-mail address> within 7 - 14 days of the receipt of this communication so that arrangements can be made to receive the requested information.

<INSERT NAME OF COUNCIL>
 <INSERT CONTACT PERSON'S NAME>
 <INSERT CONTACT PHONE #>
 <INSERT CONTACT E-MAIL ADDRESS>
 <INSERT CONTACT MAILING ADDRESS>

Encl

Appendix Q: Sample Request for Policy Recommendation

Template for P-16 Policy Recommendations

Memo

To: <Insert name of school district> School District Board of Trustees & Superintendent <Insert name of superintendent>

From: <Insert name of your P-16 Community Engagement Council>, Subcommittee on <Insert name of subcommittee>

Re: <Insert a one line explanation of what this memo is about>

Under the authority of the P-16 Council as it stems from state statutes and Accreditation Standard 18 and the State Defined Pilot Guidelines for P-16 Councils to make accurate assessments of the strengths and limitations of the school district as a basis for recommending effective approaches to create quality schools, the <Insert name of your P-16 Community Engagement Council> has established a Subcommittee on <insert name of subcommittee> that is responsible for researching and developing policy recommendations that impact <Insert topic being addressed by subcommittee>. Based on our analysis of our school district and other districts, we believe that <Insert what policy recommendation your committee has come up with>. The memo below explains our analysis and potential ways in which to enhance our district policy.

<Paragraph 2. should briefly explain and define the problem.> To address these challenges, we propose that <Insert your solution>.

<Paragraph 3 & 4 should briefly explain potential solutions. Explain where these ideas came from and if they have worked in other school districts that we can learn from. If funding will be needed, explain where it can come from. Try to explain the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, and HOW of the recommendations so that the people reading this know exactly what you are thinking. Be sure to end the paragraph with a one sentence summary of why they should make the recommended policy change.>

<IMPORTANT NOTE: This memo should NOT be longer than 1 page. It needs to be clear and concise and formal.>

P-16 Community Engagement Council

President --- Vice President --- Secretary

Contact _____ with any questions or comments.

Appendix Q: Sample Request for Policy Recommendation

Template for P-16 Policy Recommendations

Memo

To: X School District Board of Trustees & Superintendent X

From: X P-16 Community Engagement Council, Subcommittee on Vocational Education and College Readiness

Re: Recommendations for Increasing Vocational Opportunities for Our Students

Under the authority of the P-16 Council as it stems from state statutes and Accreditation Standard 18 and the State Defined Pilot Guidelines for P-16 Councils to make accurate assessments of the strengths and limitations of the school district as a basis for recommending effective approaches to create quality schools, the **P-16 Council** has established a Subcommittee on **Vocational Education and College Readiness** that is responsible for researching and developing policy recommendations that impact **our student's pathways and opportunities after graduation**. Based on our analysis of our school district and other districts, we believe that **the School District should expand the vocational opportunities available to our students**. The memo below explains our analysis and potential ways in which to enhance our district policy.

Based on our research into our local and regional vocational offerings and, we have discovered that there are many vocational opportunities that our students should have access to but cannot access under the current system. While students have access to basic vocational courses, there are other vocational needs, such as welding and carpentry, which align directly with jobs that students can get coming out of high school. Though X has historically had a much broader offering of vocational classes, because of the size of our district, one of the greatest challenges has been finding enough funding to be able to provide full time instructors, classroom space, and materials. As a result, our students are left with fewer options than their counterparts in larger districts, and thus have fewer options upon graduation. To address these challenges, we propose that the X School District enter an agreement with Y School District for access to its votech courses in exchange for a per student tuition payment.

While currently the X School District provides all of its vocational classes internally, it could take advantage of vocational opportunities in the Y School District by forging partnerships and providing individual tuition. Since the Y School District has a much larger population and a votech center, X in an ideal scenario for establishing this relationship. X students would be allowed to take vocational courses in a nearby community during a certain class period or periods. In exchange, X would provide transportation and pay a tuition fee per student. X benefits by increasing the offerings to its own students without prohibitively increasing its own costs. Meanwhile, Y School District benefits from the tuition funds that would allow it to broaden its own offerings by filling empty class slots.



Historically, X has had such a relationship with Y Schools and similar relationships have existed between other school districts, such as Coahoma County Schools and Clarksdale City Schools. Exploring a votech agreement with Y School District would enhance our student's future opportunities, increase our graduation rate by giving students something tangible to work towards, and would save X much needed funds.

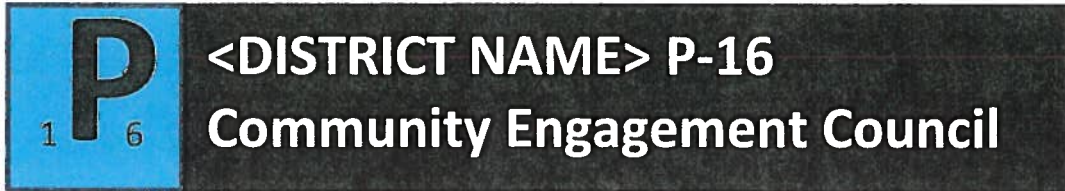
P-16 Community Engagement Council

President --- Vice President --- Secretary

Contact _____ with any questions or comments.



Appendix R: P-16 Sample Logo



Appendix S: About the Author

Building Your P-16: A How To Guide for Establishing P-16 Community Engagement Councils was developed by Babak Mostaghimi, Director of Community, Family, and School Engagement at The Center for Education Innovation (CEI). CEI is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit founded through generous support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 2008 and the vision of key Mississippi education leaders. CEI functions as a statewide education policy and implementation center designed to improve and increase student achievement, teacher and administrator quality/quantity; community engagement; and early child care and education in Mississippi. Based in the capital city of Jackson, CEI is at the vanguard statewide initiatives that seek to transform Mississippi's public education system collaborates with an array of public and private partners such as the MS Department of Education, Children's Defense Fund, Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (S.P.A.R.K.), Excel by 5, AT&T Mississippi, Barksdale Reading Institute, MS Head Start, and MS Kids Count.

CEI's work involves a two-prong approach of working at the state and local levels in an effort to create sustainable change for children and families who live in marginalized and under-resourced communities. Our state level work is broad and policy focused, while our local level work is rooted in both practice and policy. At the statewide level CEI acts as a partner, collaborator and influencer to create sustainable systems change, develop necessary infrastructure, and establish an education-focused culture in MS. At the local level, it focuses on the implementation of best-practices for improving educational outcomes. Finally, we accomplish our goals by implementing programs, services and activities through three *Transformational Pathways*: a) Early Childhood Development and Learning; b) Leading, Teaching and Learning for Excellence; and c) Community, Family and School Engagement.

Babak Mostaghimi is the Director of Community, Family, and School Engagement at the Center for Education Innovation. Prior to joining the Center for Education Innovation, Mostaghimi was a classroom teacher in Shelby, Mississippi where he was named North Bolivar School District Teacher of the Year in 2008. He holds a Masters in Public Policy Degree from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government focused on Human Resources, Labor, and Education and Co-Directed the Community Development Project, housed at the Harvard WEB Dubois Institute. In addition, Mostaghimi holds a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and International Relations from Johns Hopkins University where he received the prestigious Alexander K. Barton Cup for exhibiting strong character, high ideals, and effective moral leadership. Mostaghimi has been a part of P-16 Council training and development across Mississippi and is a community engagement expert.

