

Local Accountability and Transformation Plan: An Alternative to State Governance in Memphis-Shelby County Schools

Executive Summary

Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS) acknowledges the persistent challenges facing our students and the urgent need for improvement. The **Local Accountability and Transformation Plan** (“Plan”) serves as a proactive alternative to state-imposed governance. It allows MSCS to maintain local control while establishing the structure, oversight, and urgency that state intervention seeks to enact.

The Plan is based on the following four components of transformation.

- Component 1: Governance and Accountability
- Component 2: Academic Success
- Component 3: Operational Stability & Fiscal Transparency
- Component 4: Data-Driven Facilities Blueprint

I. **Component 1: Governance and Accountability**

Focus: Operationalize the Shelby County Board of Education’s “Resolution of the Shelby County Board of Education Advancing Cross-Sector and Community Partnerships Through Collaboration and Accountability” to strengthen board effectiveness, stakeholder collaboration, and transparent decision-making.

Central to this effort is establishing clear, measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks for academic, fiscal, and operational success, ensuring all stakeholders are driving toward the same validated goals.

Expected Outcome: A unified, multi-sector accountability structure that ensures district leadership, local government, and community partners operate under a shared set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Success will be evidenced by:

- Elimination of redundant bureaucratic hurdles.
- A measurable increase in public trust via real-time data access.
- A Board of Education that operates with high-functioning, student-centered efficiency as verified by external 3rd-party evaluations.

Intervention 1: Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Collaboration

- Establish an Intergovernmental Transformation Council (“Council”) to collaborate with MSCS on alignment of academic, fiscal, and operational goals. The Council will serve as an advisory committee and, unless otherwise provided, be governed under Board policy (0024).

Duration: The Council shall operate under a 3-year charter. If established goals are not met and/or if additional goals are established during this timeframe, the charter may be extended for an additional year.

Membership: The Council, at a minimum, will be comprised of the following:

Elected Officials

Members are appointed by the Chair of their respective governing bodies, and where applicable, must include bipartisan representation.

- 2 Board of Education Members
- 2 Shelby County Commissioners
- 2 Memphis City Council Members
- 2 Shelby County Legislative Delegation Members
- City and County Mayors (or designees)

Strategic Stakeholders

Members are appointed by the presiding leadership of the specific entity/organization represented (e.g., Teacher Association, Student Council, Parent Steering Committee, or PTA, or the Commissioner of Education).

- 2 Teachers (1 from each Teacher Association)
- 2 parents
- 2 students
- Superintendent (and support staff as needed)
- 1 Chamber of Commerce
- 1 Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE)

The Council shall have the authority to appoint additional community and business leaders who possess expertise or professional experience in fields critical to the Transformation Plan (e.g., finance, facilities management, infrastructure).

The Council will:

- Establish clear KPIs and benchmarks for academic, fiscal, and operational success.
- Identify MSCS's most critical education challenges.
- Assess current strategies.
- Provide data-driven recommendations for addressing identified gaps and needed resources.
- Provide quarterly reports to the public and the Shelby County Delegation.

To elevate opportunities for parental voice in decision-making, a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) will be established as a sub-committee of the Council. Membership on the PAC must be representative of the district's geographic regions, school board members' boundaries, and grade bands. The PAC will be responsible for the following:

- Collaborating with school-level parent organizations to identify emerging concerns and best practices across districts.
- Present parent feedback as recommendations to the Council.

Intervention 2: Student Outcome-Focused Governance and Policy Alignment

- Conduct board self-assessments, facilitated by a 3rd party (e.g., Council of Great City Schools, TSBA), to evaluate school board effectiveness and identify strengths and opportunities to improve governance practices (primary domains of the assessment will focus on policymaking, fiscal oversight, and student-centered decision-making).
- Create a governance action plan, in consultation with the 3rd party, setting forth governance goals and key performance targets for continuous improvement based on the self-assessment results. The action plan must include a mechanism to track and report on progress.
- Participate in targeted governance training.
- Conduct a policy audit, in collaboration with the Superintendent and staff to identify, amend, or repeal policies that hinder instructional and operational efficiency (e.g., hiring, procurement).

Intervention 3: Forensic Audit Report

- Review any reports from the TN Comptroller’s forensic audit and use any data to make informed assessments and/or recommendations for improvement.

Intervention 4: Data-Driven Transparency and Fiscal Integrity

- Implement a data dashboard aligned with Board policy (0028) to ensure transparency regarding MSCS progress towards academic, operational, and fiscal key performance indicators. *The dashboard will be available to the Council to track high-level benchmarks.*

Intervention 5: Community Engagement and Communication Strategy

- Launch a dedicated online platform for tracking Key Performance Indicators and key milestones.
- Establish a publicly accessible website for highlighting school-level successes and district achievements.
- Conduct quarterly town halls as a platform for providing joint updates from the Superintendent, school board, and Council.

II. Component 2: Academic Success

Focus: Implement the MSCS Academic Plan, developed in collaboration with the Council of Great City Schools, as the official instructional blueprint for MSCS.

Expected Outcome: A single, coherent system that aligns curriculum, instruction, professional learning, leadership actions, and monitoring routines across all schools. Success will be evidenced by the transition from a collection of independent schools to a unified, high-performing system where data-driven 'early warning' cycles and rigid instructional fidelity ensure that every student, regardless of zip code, receives high-quality Tier I instruction that produces predictable, verifiable, and equitable academic growth.

Intervention 1: Tier I Instruction

- Utilize district-aligned tools to ensure students are receiving high-quality Tier I instruction.
- Administer Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) to measure mastery of priority standards.
- Review academic performance, attendance, and implementation data at school, regional, and district levels to identify risks.
- Monitor progress to determine if improvement is occurring on a predictable and verifiable trajectory. Includes
 - Provision of consistent access to grade-level Tier I instruction.
 - Reducing instructional variability across schools.
 - Increasing effectiveness and reach of targeted supports.
 - Narrowing subgroup performance gaps.

Intervention 2: Corrective Actions

- Implement the following corrective actions:
 - Implement targeted instructional corrections within 30 Days.
 - Initiate an intensified support cycle with increased supervision after 60 Days.
 - Conduct a formal review to determine if further escalation is needed after 90 Days.

Additional Consequences for Persistent Non-Implementation

- Mandate instructional redesigns if support fails.
- Require professional learning/coaching assignments if support fails.
- Increase supervision and monitoring frequency if support fails.
- Reallocate academic resources and supports.
- Adjust instructional leadership responsibilities if support fails.

Intervention 3: Oversight and Transparency

- Engage the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) to conduct periodic reviews and issue written progress reports.
- Maintain data integrity and report monitoring results through district dashboards and Board updates.

- Embed the academic framework into district policy and leadership onboarding to ensure that the Plan survives leadership changes.

III. **Component 3: Operational Stability & Fiscal Transparency**

Focus: Implement a zero/goal-based budgeting process that is student-centric and aligned to MSCS’s strategic plan(s). Board priorities shall be established each year in accordance with Board policy (2001).

Expected Outcome: Establish a sustainable, efficient, and transparent operational and fiscal framework that maximizes resources for student-centered priorities, eliminates waste, and builds long-term financial stability. Success will be evidenced by:

- A balanced budget achieved through zero/goal-based budgeting that aligns expenditures with Board-approved strategic priorities and the MSCS Academic Plan.
- Demonstrated positive return on investment (ROI) for all major contracts and programs, with underperforming initiatives phased out or redesigned.
- High levels of public and stakeholder trust in fiscal management.

Intervention 1: Academic Return on Investment (A-ROI) Analysis

- Conduct a review of major contracts, programs, and services to assess A-ROI and their effectiveness in supporting student outcomes.
- Launch an online database of current MSCS contracts.

Intervention 2: Internal Efficiency Taskforce

- Form a dedicated internal cross-functional task force to assess resource allocation and ensure fiscal and operational optimization (eliminate waste and duplication of services).

Intervention 3: Budget Dashboard

- Launch a publicly accessible budget dashboard showing expenditures and strategic alignment.

IV. **Component 4: Data-Driven Facilities Blueprint**

Focus: Provide a roadmap for transforming the MSCS physical footprint into a strategic asset for student success.

Expected Outcome: Transform the district’s physical infrastructure into an optimized, equitable, and future-ready asset that directly supports academic success, operational efficiency, and community needs. Success will be evidenced by:

- Board approval of a comprehensive, data-driven Master Facilities Plan, incorporating enrollment trends, building condition assessments, academic performance data, and community input.

- Measurable annual savings from strategic consolidations redirected to school modernizations.
- All students attending schools rated in “good” or “excellent” condition (per facility condition index).
- Equitable distribution of high-quality facilities across geographic and demographic subgroups, with no disproportionate concentration of substandard buildings in high-poverty areas.

Intervention 1: Districtwide Master Facilities Plan

- Implement an in-depth analysis of each of the four district regions, synthesizing building condition, utilization, enrollment, capacity, historic trends, planned residential developments, birth, school-aged population, etc.
- Establish a regional priority matrix that balances urgent structural needs with long-term demographic viability.
- Create districtwide recommendations, including strategies for prioritizing projects, innovative ideas around funding, and areas of further study
- Identify non-traditional revenue streams, including but not limited to public-private partnerships and grant opportunities to supplement capital budgets.

Intervention 2: Capital Project Prioritization

- Utilize the recently completed Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) detailing building system (HVAC, roof, window, site, flooring, lighting, etc.) condition, age, and ideal replacement dates as the primary source for project prioritization.
- Ensure capital expenditures align with the MSCS Facilities Roadmap.
- Accelerate addressing aging infrastructure and maintenance backlog.

Intervention 3: Merger, Consolidation, and Investment Strategy

- Create a three-year school consolidation plan that includes a strategy for identifying 3-5 schools to close annually. This strategy will be included in the facility master plan.
- Establish a student-centered framework to strategically consolidate and/or close underutilized facilities, reinvesting savings into the modernization of fewer, stronger sites and the creation of state-of-the-art learning environments.
- Implement a student-centered school consolidation strategy that ensures student equity and amplifies community voices, while facilitating smooth student transitions and innovative repurposing of surplus facilities.
- Proactively manage the district’s real estate portfolio by repurposing, transferring, and/or selling vacant facilities in alignment with recommendations of the Board’s Facility Ad-Hoc Committee.