#539

Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER)

Report to
the Mississippi Legislature

Opportunities for Improving the Accountability of the Mississippi Department of Education

The Board of Education requested that the PEER Committee conduct a review to seek opportunities on how to hold the Mississippi Department of Education accountable to the board. PEER determined that the Board of Education's ability to hold the department accountable is affected by federal and state mandates, the way that accountability tools are used, and changes in educational standards and programs.

The report provides a list of opportunities for improving the accountability of the department. These suggested opportunities may be summarized as follows:

- *federal and state mandates*--operationally define mandates and advocate for unified reporting mandates based on meaningful outcome measures;

- *accountability tools*--refocus the Office of Educational Accountability, improve strategic planning, identify what measures and activities are under the department's direct control versus the control of external entities, link resource allocation to the strategic plan, assess staffing patterns periodically, improve reporting of expenditures for contract staff, apply principles of performance-based contracting, improve the quality of performance measures, utilize grant funding for development of a statewide longitudinal data system, use research on outcome measures to demonstrate overall effectiveness of programs, produce multi-year trend reports, and use a "data dashboard" to inform the board; and,

- *changes in educational standards and programs*--focus on developing a performance management capacity supported by a full complement of sound measurement tools.

The report provides details for implementation of these opportunities on pages 85 through 104.

September 14, 2010

PEER: The Mississippi Legislature's Oversight Agency

The Mississippi Legislature created the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER Committee) by statute in 1973. A joint committee, the PEER Committee is composed of seven members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker and seven members of the Senate appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. Appointments are made for four-year terms, with one Senator and one Representative appointed from each of the U. S. Congressional Districts and three at-large members appointed from each house. Committee officers are elected by the membership, with officers alternating annually between the two houses. All Committee actions by statute require a majority vote of four Representatives and four Senators voting in the affirmative.

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The Committee assigns top priority to written requests from individual legislators and legislative committees. The Committee also considers PEER staff proposals and written requests from state officials and others.

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September 14, 2010

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Honorable Billy McCoy, Speaker of the House
Members of the Mississippi State Legislature

On September 14, 2010, the PEER Committee authorized release of the report entitled **Opportunities for Improving the Accountability of the Mississippi Department of Education**.

Senator Nolan Mettetal, Chair

This report does not recommend increased funding or additional staff.

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Opportunities for Improving the Accountability of the Mississippi Department of Education

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Mississippi State Board of Education requested a third-party review to seek opportunities on how to hold the State Department of Education (MDE) accountable to the board. The board's Chair noted that the board needs assistance in helping to improve the accountability of MDE under the new State Superintendent, who began serving in his position in January 2010.

In performing this review, PEER sought to answer the following questions:

- What factors affect the board's ability to hold MDE accountable for its use of resources?
- How could MDE's accountability be improved?

Background

Mississippi commits more of its general fund budget to K-12 public education than to any other budget category. The Mississippi Department of Education has not been exempt from the effects of the budget crisis, however. The 2011 *Budget Report* shows a decrease of ten percent in funding to public education for FY 2011.

A nine-member State Board of Education oversees the Mississippi Department of Education, sets public education policy, and is responsible for appointing the State Superintendent of Education.

MDE receives revenues from federal grants, state general funds, and other funds. From FY 2007 to FY 2009, funding for general education programs decreased by 7%, primarily as a result of a decrease in federal funding.

Although recent improvement has been reported, results on national assessments and on the American College Test indicate that Mississippi students lag behind the rest of the nation. Also, many students are not demonstrating

proficiency on the most recent, more rigorous state assessments.

Conclusions

What factors affect the Board of Education's ability to hold the Department of Education accountable for its use of resources?

The Board of Education's ability to hold the department accountable is affected by federal and state mandates, how accountability tools are used, and changes in educational standards and programs.

Federal and State Mandates

Federal and state mandates reflect the complex nature of the educational system and the difficult task the board has in holding MDE accountable.

Broad, vague, and sometimes immeasurable mandates in state law regarding public education affect the board's ability to hold MDE accountable. MDE shares responsibility with many other parties for fulfilling the education mandates in state law. These other parties include the federal government, the state board and state superintendent of education, other state-level boards, councils, task forces, local school boards, communities, parents, and children. Disjointed accountability mandates account for a significant amount of MDE staff time and ultimately could impede the ability of MDE to focus on the effectiveness of MDE programs.

How Accountability Tools are Used

By adopting a performance management approach, MDE would greatly increase its ability to align its resources and operations to desired results. Also, the board could increase its ability to make sound, results-oriented policy decisions. In adopting this approach, the board and the department should utilize tools already available (e. g., strategic planning).

In the context of performance management, the department has certain tools available to it that are essential for the board to hold the department accountable. These are listed below, along with PEER's conclusions regarding each.

- *The Office of Educational Accountability*--The Office of Educational Accountability currently focuses more on financial auditing than on program accountability.
- *Strategic planning and departmental performance measures*--By incorporating performance measures, time frames for achievement, programmatic

responsibility, and associated resource allocations (both financial and staffing) into MDE's strategic plan, the board would greatly increase its ability to hold the department accountable for the efficient and effective utilization of its resources. It would further help the board for the department to differentiate in its strategic plan between those activities for which outcomes are under its direct control versus those activities that require implementation by external entities, such as school districts, to achieve success.

- *Resource allocation and organizational structure*--Because the Department of Education's budget is not linked to its strategic plan, the board is unable to make fully informed decisions regarding the commitment of departmental resources. Also, periodic assessments of the organizational structure and staffing patterns would allow the board and the department to use these as a management tool to achieve long-term goals.
- *Measurement and reporting*--MDE's current departmental performance measures are not appropriate to establish accountability because they focus solely on measuring the activities performed rather than measuring the results achieved. Performance measures should ultimately reflect accountability of a person, group, or organization for the results of an activity and should provide managers with information on how resources and efforts should be allocated to increase effectiveness.
- *Data systems and research*--Although the Department of Education collects and reports a significant amount of data, the department is not using this data to its fullest extent. Because Mississippi's existing education data systems (i. e., K-12, post-secondary, workforce) were originally designed to meet annual reporting requirements, not to track progress over time, these systems have not been linked. Thus presently it is difficult, if not impossible, for the board or the department to examine student progress and outcomes over time and to determine whether students are prepared for college and for the workforce.

  Also, the board does not have a visual instrument that synthesizes the data collected by MDE and that presents the information contained in this data in a form that is accessible to non-data experts. Thus the board is not able to evaluate fully the effectiveness of the programs and offices at MDE or to determine the status of progress

toward the educational goals that it has set for MDE.

Changes in Educational Standards and Programs

The effectiveness of MDE's programs and activities is difficult to gauge over time when educational standards and ways of thinking are in an almost constant state of change and when funds for specific programs are eliminated or reduced before effectiveness can be demonstrated.

The state has experienced significant changes in recent years regarding its educational standards, assessments, and accountability model. Some of these are listed below, along with PEER's conclusions regarding each.

- *Changes in curriculum and assessments*--In 2006-07, MDE increased the rigor of curriculum and assessment standards in response to poor performance on the national assessment and on the ACT. In June 2010, the board adopted a "national common core" curriculum that will require Mississippi to revise its curriculum again. State assessments are likely to change also.
- *Changes in the state accountability model*--In 2007, state law mandated inclusion of graduation and dropout rates in the state accountability model. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, MDE changed its state accountability model for the fourth time since 1988 in response to the more rigorous curriculum and assessment system implemented in 2007-08. In 2005, all fifty states agreed to begin implementing a standard method for calculating graduation and dropout rates (i. e., a cohort rate). As of 2010, MDE will only use a cohort rate for reporting.
- *Discontinued funding for High School Redesign*--In 2006, the previous Superintendent of Education announced a shift in education and termed it Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce, also known as High School Redesign. This focus on integrating academic and technical content in education was intended to prepare students for the workplace more effectively, lower the dropout rate, and make college an option for all Mississippi students. However, after funding a total of thirty-two school district pilot sites for implementation of the program, the Legislature did not fund High School Redesign for the 2009-10 school year. The effects on schools that have not received funding are unknown due to the lack of research on the effectiveness of the program.
- *Discontinued funding for Mississippi's Reading Reform Model*--Mississippi has abandoned parts of

the Mississippi Reading Reform Model because most of its funding came from sources that are no longer available. Currently, Mississippi has no statewide literacy plan.

- *Reduced funding for the Children's Progress Academic Assessment*--In 2007, the Legislature passed a law requiring MDE to implement early literacy and numeracy screening assessment instruments. MDE selected a contractor to administer the assessments, but this contract will be eliminated in the 2010-11 school year due to budget cuts. The level of effectiveness of this program will not have been established due to the short period in which to monitor program results.

PEER does not believe that all of these changes are necessarily negative; in fact, some appear to move MDE in a positive direction in accomplishing its mission. The goal for the board and MDE should be to monitor the changes and measure progress over time to demonstrate the effectiveness of the changes.

Opportunities for Improving Accountability of the Department of Education

How could the accountability of the Department of Education be improved?

PEER provides the following list of twenty opportunities for improving the accountability of the Department of Education. Pages 85 through 104 of the report provide details on implementing each of these proposed opportunities.

1. *Define Mandates*--The Board of Education, working through MDE, should operationally define as many mandates as possible.
2. *Advocate for Unified Reporting Mandates Based on Meaningful Outcome Measures*--After developing logic models for its major activities (as discussed on page 94 of the report), the Board of Education, working through MDE, should present the Legislature with suggestions for improving statewide reporting mandates.
3. *Refocus the Office of Educational Accountability*--The recent reorganization of the Office of Educational Accountability would allow for a shift from financial accountability to increased accountability of MDE programs and resources. The office could then play a critical role in helping the board fulfill its role to hold MDE accountable for programs and resources.
4. *Goal Setting*--The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by establishing realistic goals based on research data.

5. *Goal Setting*--The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by establishing interim progress goals for all three system goals.

6. *Goal Setting*--The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by refraining from tying goals and outcome measures to national averages.

7. *Strategies, Outcome Measures, and Action Steps*--The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning by converting outcome measures to measurable terms.

8. *Strategies, Outcome Measures, and Action Steps*--The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning by improving consistency in designation of objectives as goals, strategies, or outcome measures.

9. *Strategies, Outcome Measures, and Action Steps*--The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning by developing specific strategies for achieving each of the three system goals.

10. *Identify What is Under the Department's Control*--The Department of Education should differentiate between outcome measures and activities that are under its direct control versus those under the control of external entities.

11. *Link Resource Allocation to the Strategic Plan*--The Board of Education should align resource allocation (both financial and staffing) with its strategic plan.

12. *Periodically Assess Staffing Patterns*--To help ensure efficient use of staff in accomplishing educational goals, the Department of Education should periodically assess staffing patterns in relation to departmental workload and long-range plans for educational improvement, particularly in the area of improving instruction.

13. *Improve Reporting of Expenditures for Contract Staff*--To establish accountability for contract staff, the Department of Education should improve its reporting of contractual expenditures for contract staff, annually compiling a summary report of categorized contractual service expenditures that provides the contract purpose, the expenditure amounts, the number of contracts, and retiree status of contractors.

14. *Apply Principles of Performance-Based Contracting*--To enhance accountability for contract staff by focusing on end results, the Board of Education should familiarize itself with the elements of performance-based contracting and apply those principles when reviewing contract expenditure information presented by the department's staff.

15. *Improve the Quality of Performance Measures*--The Department of Education should improve the identification and use of its performance measures.

16. *Utilize Grant Funding for Development of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System*--In June 2009 and May 2010, the U. S. Department of Education awarded Mississippi grants--one for $3.4 million and one for $7.6 million--to design and implement a statewide longitudinal data system. By the end of the second grant period in 2013, MDE expects to have a relational database linking all education (K-20) and workforce data.

17. *Use Research on Outcome Measures to Demonstrate Overall Effectiveness of Program*s--The federal government has established meaningful outcome measures that the Department of Education could use as models for indicators of overall program or system effectiveness.

18. *Produce Multi-Year Trend Reports*--To provide for better analyses of student performance data, the Department of Education should produce multi-year trend reports for districts. MDE could connect staff from the Office of Research and Statistics to district staff in order to increase the level of analysis and interpretation of student performance data.

19. *Use a "Data Dashboard"*--The Department of Education's implementation of a visual instrument that contains key indicators of performance (i. e., a "data dashboard") would enable the board to see, at a glance, whether current efforts toward meeting its goals are on track and to respond quickly and appropriately when problems arise.

20. *Measure and Manage Change*--In order to mitigate the challenges of changing standards and programs, both the Board of Education and the Department of Education could benefit from focusing additional effort on developing performance management capacity supported by a full complement of sound measurement tools (i. e., longitudinal data systems, creative use of multiple indicators, a data dashboard).

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Opportunities for Improving the Accountability of the Mississippi Department of Education

Report Outline

Introduction

Part I: Background
A Snapshot of the Status of Education in Mississippi

Part II: What factors affect the Board of Education's ability to hold the Department of Education accountable for its use of resources?

Part III: How could the accountability of the Department of Education be improved?

Part IV: Appendices

Introduction

Authority

PEER conducted the review pursuant to the authority granted by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 5-3-57 et seq. (1972).

Problem Statement

The Mississippi State Board of Education requested a third-party review to seek opportunities on how to hold the State Department of Education (MDE) accountable to the board.

In making this request, the board's Chairman noted the following:

- while MDE produces a large amount of data, the information is not clear for the board's decision-making purposes;
- the number of MDE programs and the extent to which they are effective are not clear to the board;
- because MDE procures a large amount of contractual services, the board needs more targeted information on whether these contracts are needed; and,
- although the board believes that timeframes for goals are important and has set timeframes in its three bold goals for education in the state, the value of timeframes was not emphasized during the department's previous administration.

In summary, the board needs assistance in helping to improve the accountability of MDE under the new State Superintendent, who began his employment in January 2010.

Scope and Purpose

In performing this review, PEER sought to answer the following questions:

- What factors affect the board's ability to hold MDE accountable for its use of resources?

- How could MDE's accountability be improved?[1]

Method

In conducting this review, PEER:

- reviewed applicable state and federal laws;
- interviewed personnel and examined records of MDE;
- reviewed current and previous MDE organizational charts;
- reviewed MDE's budget requests to the Legislature;
- reviewed MDE's Strategic Plan for 2011-2015; and,
- reviewed various departmental and program reports and materials.

[1] PEER presented accountability issues and opportunities similar to those presented in this report in *A Review of the State Department of Education's Internal Management and its Oversight of District and Student Performance* (Report #276, February 19, 1992).

Part I

Overview of Part I

Background

Mississippi commits more of its general fund budget to K-12 public education than to any other budget category. The Mississippi Department of Education has not been exempt from the effects of the budget crisis, however. The 2011 *Budget Report* shows a decrease of ten percent in funding to public education for FY 2011.

A nine-member State Board of Education oversees the Mississippi Department of Education, sets public education policy, and is responsible for appointing the State Superintendent of Education.

MDE receives revenues from federal grants, state general funds, and other funds. From FY 2007 to FY 2009, funding for general education programs decreased by 7%, primarily as a result of a decrease in federal funding.

A Snapshot of the Status of Education in Mississippi

Although recent improvement has been reported, results on national assessments and on the American College Test indicate that Mississippi students lag behind the rest of the nation. Also, many students are not demonstrating proficiency on the most recent, more rigorous state assessments.

Background

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is organized and functions under the statutory requirements of Title 37 of the MISSISSIPPI CODE ANNOTATED (1972). As established in MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-1 (1972), a nine-member State Board of Education (hereafter referred to as "the board"), oversees MDE, sets public education policy, and is responsible for appointing the State Superintendent of Education.

Mississippi's K-12 Education Budget

According to the Department of Finance and Administration's *Budget Report* for FY 2010, 62.1 percent of the general fund budget for that fiscal year was appropriated for educational activities (excluding the institutions of higher learning's agricultural units). Public education alone, including those agencies or programs listed in Exhibit 1, page 8, accounted for 44.8 percent of the state's total general fund appropriations for FY 2010.

Thus Mississippi commits more of its general fund budget to K-12 public education than to any other budget category. The state policy for education, according to MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-2 (j) (1972), acknowledges this investment:

> *That the return on public education which is the single largest investment for the state be the effectiveness of the delivery system and the product it is designed to produce. . . .*

Education has not been exempt from the effects of the budget crisis, however. The FY 2010 public education budget represented a decrease of over $129 million (5.7%) from FY 2009. As shown in Exhibit 1, page 8, the FY 2011 *Budget Report* shows a decrease of 10 percent in the public education budget for FY 2011. The state's general education programs were the most affected, with a decrease in appropriations of 19.8 percent.

Exhibit 1: Percentage Changes in K-12 Education Appropriations from FY 2010 to FY 2011

	FY 2010	FY 2011	Percentage Increase or Decrease
General Education Programs	$ 111,517,354	$ 89,400,000	-19.8%
Chickasaw Interest	13,004,818	14,515,760	11.6%
Mississippi Adequate Education Program	1,903,186,090	1,716,132,154	-9.8%
Schools for the Blind and Deaf	12,163,010	10,991,709	-9.6%
Vocational and Technical Education	76,377,835	73,300,000	-4.0%
Educational Television Authority	6,813,176	5,913,653	-13.2%
Library Commission	13,124,321	11,597,256	-11.6%
Total Public Education	**$2,136,186,604**	**$1,921,850,532**	**-10.0%**

SOURCE: Mississippi Joint Legislative Budget Committee's FY 2011 *Budget Report*.

Composition and Duties of the State Board of Education

A nine-member State Board of Education oversees the Mississippi Department of Education, sets public education policy, and is responsible for appointing the State Superintendent of Education.

As presently constituted under MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-1 (1972), the board is composed as follows:

- five members appointed by the Governor:
  - one member from the Northern Supreme Court District;
  - one member from the Central Supreme Court District;
  - one member from the Southern Supreme Court District;
  - one member who is employed as a school administrator; and,

    - one member who is employed as a public school teacher;
- two members at large appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; and,
- two members at large appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The board meets monthly, as required by State Board Policy 1404, and is responsible for the following duties as described in State Board Policy 102:

> *. . .establishes and maintains a system-wide plan of performance, policy and direction of public education and adopts and maintains a curriculum and a course of study to be used in the public schools that is designed to prepare the state's children and youth to be productive, informed, creative citizens, workers and leaders. The Board also regulates all matters arising in the practical administration of the school system not otherwise provided for. The Board regulates issues such as curriculum, teacher standards and certification, student testing, accountability and school accreditation.*

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-3 (1) (a) (1972) specifically requires that the Board of Education maintain a system to ensure accountability. It states:

> *The board is directed to identify all functions of the department that contribute to or comprise a part of the state system of educational accountability and to establish and maintain within the department the necessary organizational structure, policies and procedures for effectively coordinating such functions. Such policies and procedures shall clearly fix and delineate responsibilities for various aspects of the system and for overall coordination of the total system and its effective management.*

The Office of Educational Accountability, a special office created within MDE by the Legislature (MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-151-9 [1972]), is intended to serve the State Board of Education. See page 29 for discussion regarding this office.

MDE's Organization

The Department of Education is organized and functions under the requirements of Title 37 of the MISSISSIPPI CODE ANNOTATED (1972). As noted on page 3, as of January 2010, MDE has a new State Superintendent and has recently reorganized its staff. MDE's organization (as of July 8, 2010) is illustrated in the

organizational chart in Appendix A on page 107. As of July 2010, MDE had 783 authorized and 739 filled positions.

MDE's Revenues and Expenditures

MDE receives revenues from federal grants, state general funds, and other funds. For the purposes of this review, PEER focused primarily on general education programs. Therefore, the following discussion of revenues and expenditures does not relate to the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP), Chickasaw Interest, Schools for the Blind and Deaf, Vocational Education, Educational Television Authority, and the Library Commission.

As shown in Exhibit 2, page 11, MDE's total revenues for general education programs decreased from FY 2007 to FY 2009. Because general fund appropriations increased for each of these years, the decrease may be primarily attributed to a decline of seven percent in federal funds (from $701.5 million in FY 2007 to $630 million in FY 2009).

Of approximately one hundred federal grant programs, MDE's largest sources of federal grant money are those in support of child nutrition, Title I schools,[2] and special education.

MDE's primary sources of other funds are Education Enhancement Funds,[3] which represented over $65 million in FY 2009.

Exhibit 2, page 13, also shows MDE's expenditures for FY 2007 through FY 2009. The majority of expenditures are categorized as subsidies, loans and grants.

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[2] According to the U.S. Department of Education, *Title I* schools are schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children that receive funds to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.

[3] MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-61-33 (1972) establishes the *Education Enhancement Fund*. Each month, 9.073% of the total sales tax revenue is deposited into the Education Enhancement Fund. Of the amount deposited into this fund, $16 million is appropriated each fiscal year to MDE to be distributed to all school districts for school buildings and related facilities (e. g., gymnasiums, vocational training buildings). Additional money is allocated to the cost of the adequate education program (MAEP), as well as costs related to classroom supplies, instructional materials and equipment, bus operations and maintenance, etc.

Exhibit 2: MDE's Revenue Sources and Expenditures in General Education Programs for Fiscal Years 2007 through 2009

Revenues

	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
General Fund Appropriation	$ 77,199,631	$ 91,354,934	$ 92,721,641
Federal Funds	701,550,796	637,333,352	630,107,550
Other Special Funds	22,062,998	22,283,426	19,433,133
Education Enhancement Funds	71,904,245	71,603,504	65,695,805
Critical Teacher Shortage Act	1,520,234	1,516,046	1,455,874
Health Care Expendable Fund	174,196	126,472	126,472
School District Emergency Assistance Fund	0*	0*	3,000,000
Technology Funds	120,800	0*	0*
TOTAL	**$874,532,900**	**$824,217,734**	**$812,540,475**

Expenditures

	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services	$ 26,101,022	$ 29,234,972	$31,087,188
Travel	1,394,412	1,646,791	1,516,463
Contractual Services	32,206,932	28,974,453	32,185,318
Commodities	3,677,145	3,860,233	3,646,300
Capital Outlay	3,729,253	2,887,673	2,794,935
Subsidies, Loans and Grants	807,424,136	757,613,612	741,310,271
TOTAL	**$874,532,900**	**$824,217,734**	**$812,540,475**

*MDE received $0 in revenues from this source for this fiscal year.

SOURCE: Mississippi Department of Education's Budget Office.

A Snapshot of the Status of Education in Mississippi

In an increasingly globalized economy, education policymakers now frequently note that U. S. students must be able to compete with students from around the world. In the 2009 *Condition of Education* Report, the National Center for Education Statistics states that the performance of U. S. students neither leads nor trails the world in reading, mathematics, or science at any grade or age.

National Indices

Education Week's 2007 Quality Counts Report, funded by the Pew Center on the States, found that several factors outside the classroom influence student achievement, including pre-school opportunities, parental educational attainment and employment, family income, and the median income of the community. The report determined that these factors, among others, impact a child's chance for success and that these chances vary greatly from state to state.

The report's Chance-for-Success Index grades the nation and states on thirteen indicators (e. g., percent of children in families with incomes at least 200% of poverty level, percent of fourth graders proficient on national assessment in reading) that show the critical role that education plays as a person moves from childhood through the K-12 system and into college and the workforce. For 2010, Mississippi received a D+ and ranked 49th on the Chance-for-Success Index, indicating that "the road to achievement is rougher for students and teachers in Mississippi than in most other states."

In terms of student achievement, Mississippi received a grade of F and a ranking of 51st for K-12 achievement in *Education Week's 2008 Quality Counts Report* (the most recent achievement ratings available). In all but eighth grade reading, Mississippi students had improved scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. However, as illustrated in Exhibit 3 on page 13, the national average increases in scores were greater than the increases for Mississippi students, which explains why Mississippi still ranks at the bottom.

Exhibit 3: Mississippi's and National Achievement Gains Based on NAEP Scale Score Changes from 2003 to 2007

	Mississippi Average	State Rank	National Average
4th grade math	+4.7	31	+5.1
8th grade math	+4.0	23	+4.1
4th grade reading	+2.3	30	+3.2
8th grade reading	-4.9	51	-0.3

SOURCE: PEER analysis of 2008 *Quality Counts* report.

American College Test Scores

The American College Test (ACT), a standardized test for high school achievement and college admissions, is widely recognized as a valid measure of students' knowledge and their capacity to perform well in college. Content areas include English, math, reading, and science.

According to ACT, 93 percent of 2009 graduates took the ACT. The average composite score for Mississippi was 18.9, the lowest score of all fifty states plus the District of Columbia. Mississippi had the lowest math and reading scores. (See Exhibit 4, below.)

Exhibit 4: Mississippi Students' Average Scores, National Averages, and State Rankings by Subject Area for 2009 on the ACT

Subject Area	Average Score	National Average	State Ranking
English	19.1	20.6	46th
Math	18.3	21.0	51st
Reading	19.0	21.4	51st
Science	18.7	20.9	50th
Average Composite Score	18.9	21.1	51st

SOURCE: American College Testing (ACT).

National Assessment of Educational Progress Scores

One of the MDE's main goals is to reach the national average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by 2013. NAEP measures student learning for a representative sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in several content areas. Testing of grades 4 and 8 in reading and math is required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in order to receive Title I funds. Exhibit 5, below, illustrates Mississippi's results for 2009.

Exhibit 5: Mississippi Students' Average Scores, National Averages, and State Rankings by Grade and Subject Area for the Most Recently Reported Data on NAEP

Grade/Subject Area	Average Score	National Average	State Ranking
Grade 4 Math (2009)	227	239	51st
Grade 8 Math (2009)	265	282	51st
Grade 4 Reading (2009)	211	220	47th
Grade 8 Reading (2009)	250	261	51st
Grade 4 Science (2005)	133	149	45th (out of 45)
Grade 8 Science (2005)	132	147	45th (out of 45)
Grade 8 Writing (2007)	142	154	46th (out of 46)

NOTE: State participation in NAEP, other than reading and mathematics in grades 4 and 8, is voluntary. Only 45 states participated in grade 4 and grade 8 science for 2005. Only 46 states participated in grade 8 writing for 2007.

SOURCE: NAEP National Results and State Profile for Mississippi.

While these scores show Mississippi students consistently at the bottom in reading and math, there has been some improvement shown in math over time. NAEP scores indicate that, in fourth-grade and eighth-grade math, the percentage of students in Mississippi who performed at or above the NAEP proficient level was much greater in 2009 than in 1992. For example, the percentage of students in Mississippi who performed at or above the NAEP basic level was 69 percent in math in 2009. In 1992, only 36 percent scored at or above the basic level. Since 2003, nearly every state has seen improvements in math achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress at both the fourth- and eighth-grade levels.

There is also some indication that fourth-grade reading has slowly improved. The percentage of students in Mississippi who performed at or above the NAEP proficient level was 22 percent in 2009, greater than the 14 percent who performed at the proficient level in 1992.

Challenge to Lead and *Quality Counts* Reports

Recent data from the Southern Regional Education Board's *Challenge to Lead Goals for Education 2010* showed that Mississippi is making progress in the following ways:

- Mississippi's fourth-graders made the largest percentage-point increase in the nation in reading at the NAEP "basic" level from 2007 to 2009.
- Mississippi's black fourth-graders narrowed the achievement gap in reading on NAEP, as did its black eighth-graders in math.
- The composite ACT score improved in Mississippi from 1999 to 2009.
- Recent high school graduates in Mississippi enrolled in college at a higher rate than their U. S. peers.

Another sign of improvement, according to *Education Week's 2010 Quality Counts Report*, is that Mississippi, as well as other states, has made progress in adopting policies that establish standards for academic content, aligning assessments to those standards, and holding schools accountable for results.

State Assessments

For the 2009-10 school year, Mississippi's schools conducted statewide testing of students for more than twenty-five days between August and May, primarily for the Mississippi Curriculum Test and the Subject Area Testing Program.

Most of the tests are required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. MDE believes that assessment provides accountability for instruction and that the state assessments are valid measures of students' knowledge in specific subjects.

Mississippi Curriculum Test

The Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT2) is given to students in grades 3 through 8 in the areas of reading/language arts and mathematics. These state assessments are required by the federal NCLB legislation.

There are four levels of performance on each test: *minimal*, *basic*, *proficient*, and *advanced*. According to MDE, students at the proficient level are able to perform at the level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency specified by the grade-level content standards. Students at the basic level are able to perform some of the content standards at a low level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency as specified by the grade-level content standards, while advanced level students perform at a high level. Thus, it is

preferable, although unlikely, that all students perform at the proficient level.

Exhibit 6, below, shows the percentage of Mississippi students scoring proficient or above on the MCT2 for the 2008-09 school year.

Exhibit 6: Percentage of Mississippi Students Scoring Proficient or Above on the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT2) for the 2008-09 School Year

Grade Level	% Scoring Proficient or Above
Language Arts	
3	48%
4	52%
5	51%
6	51%
7	47%
8	48%
Math	
3	57%
4	58%
5	55%
6	52%
7	55%
8	54%

SOURCE: The Mississippi Assessment and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS).

Subject Area Test (SATP2)

The SATP2 consists of four end-of-course assessments. According to State Board Policy 2600, students must pass subject area tests as a requirement for graduation. This requirement has been in place since the 2001-02 school year. Students are assessed on content at the completion of the course in Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U. S. History.

Exhibit 7, page 17, shows the percentage of Mississippi students scoring proficient or above on the SATP2 for the 2008-09 school year.

Exhibit 7: Percentage of Mississippi Students Scoring Proficient or Above on the Subject Area Tests (SATP2) for the 2008-09 School Year

Test	% Scoring Proficient or Above
U. S. History	63%
Biology	63%
Algebra I	63%
English II	49%

SOURCE: The Mississippi Assessment and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS)

How Does this Translate into What Needs to Be Done?

Although recent progress has been reported, results on national assessments and on the ACT indicate that Mississippi students lag behind the rest of the nation. Also, many students are not demonstrating proficiency on the most recent, more rigorous state assessments. The implication is that Mississippi students do not have the knowledge they need in order to compete with students from other states, let alone other parts of the world. In 2009, six of the state's 152 school districts were under conservatorship and over fifty of the 799 schools under the statewide accountability model were failing.

Each of education's multiple stakeholders has a significant role to play in the status of education in Mississippi; thus, the success or failure of school districts is not the result of a single entity but could be the result of inadequacies at multiple levels, including the federal, state, and local government levels. The challenge, then, is to determine to what extent each entity is responsible for the results produced.

MDE has an opportunity to focus on good performance management by concentrating on the short- and long-term results of its programs and activities. Ultimately, the board's ability to hold MDE accountable rests on solid performance management. Currently, there are three major factors that affect the board's ability to hold MDE accountable—federal and state mandates, use of accountability tools, and changing educational standards and programs. Each of these is discussed in subsequent chapters.

Part II

Overview of Part II

What factors affect the Board of Education's ability to hold the Department of Education accountable for its use of resources?

The Board of Education's ability to hold the department accountable is affected by:

- federal and state mandates;
- how accountability tools are used; and,
- changes in educational standards and programs.

Federal and State Mandates

Federal and state mandates reflect the complex nature of the educational system and the difficult task the board has in holding MDE accountable.

MDE's operations can often be tied to federal mandates, particularly in the area of compliance reporting. Appendix B, page 113, summarizes selected major federal mandates that direct some of the work of the department, including the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

State mandates also affect the operations of MDE, as the Legislature is actively involved in setting education policy. During the 2010 session, the Legislature passed and the Governor approved twenty-two education bills, most of which include mandates for the board and/or MDE. For example, H. B. 1056, 2010 Regular Session, authorizes the State Board of Education to select private providers, overseen by MDE, to administer, manage, or operate virtual school programs, including operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program.

These numerous federal and state mandates affect the board's ability to hold the department accountable because:

- mandates are often broad, vague, and are sometimes immeasurable;
- mandates and responsibilities are shared with many other parties; and,
- the department must respond to numerous disjointed accountability mandates.

Broad, Vague Mandates in State Law

Broad, vague, and sometimes immeasurable mandates in state law regarding public education affect the board's ability to hold MDE accountable.

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-2 (1972) establishes the educational goals that guide the functions of the Board of Education and the Department of Education. The state's education policy is based on Section 201 of Article 8 of the MISSISSIPPI CONSTITUTION, which states:

> *The Legislature shall, by general law, provide for the establishment, maintenance and support of free public schools upon such conditions and limitations as the Legislature may prescribe.*

Mississippi's policy for education, as provided for in state law, is sometimes difficult to interpret because of the broad, vague nature of the elements included within it. For example, MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-2 (1972) includes the following language:

> *(e) To improve the quality of education by strengthening it and elevating its goals;*
>
> *(f) To provide quality education for all school-age children in the state; . . . .*

Although this mandate refers to goals and quality education, it does not require any specific action by any specific entity.

In other parts of state law, vagueness in language could lead to potential misunderstanding of the intended actions. One example is another portion of CODE Section 37-1-2:

> *(m) That local school districts and their public schools be required to account for the product of their efforts; . . . .*

Further, many of the mandates in the law have terms that are not measurable. CODE Section 37-1-2 (b) refers to a "functionally literate school population," while CODE Section 37-1-2 (c) notes students should master "the most essential parts of a basic education." However, the law does not define these terms and while MDE has established what it believes to be the most essential parts of a basic education through its curriculum and assessment systems, "functionally literate" is still a subjective term.

For the reasons noted above, it is often difficult for the board, the department, or any third party to determine whether MDE is accomplishing all that is required by law.

Opportunity: Define Mandates

The Board of Education, working through MDE, should operationally define as many mandates as possible. *(See page 85).*

Responsibility for Fulfilling Mandates Shared with Multiple Parties

MDE shares responsibility with many other parties for fulfilling the education mandates in state law. These other parties include the federal government, the state board and state superintendent of education, other state-level boards, councils, task forces, local school boards, communities, parents, and children.

Both state and local entities have responsibilities for execution of the Section 201 mandate to provide free public education throughout the state of Mississippi.

While state and district entities have pivotal roles to play in education, many other parties are also responsible for the condition of education in the state. The statement of Mississippi's education policy in MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-2 (a) (1972) acknowledges this fact:

> *That the students, parents, general citizenry, local schoolteachers and administrators, local governments, local school boards, and state government have a joint and shared responsibility for the quality of education delivered through the public education system in the State of Mississippi; . . . .*

In addition to these levels of responsibility, the federal government is essential in identifying the national interest and goals in education and providing states with a portion of the resources needed to realize those goals. The federal government has become increasingly involved in education with such laws as the No Child Left Behind Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act. (See Appendix B, page 113, for descriptions of these laws.)

The State Board of Education has major policy and oversight responsibility in the area of public education. The board, working through the State Department of Education, has a difficult and important responsibility for the quality of education and support services provided to districts. Often the board must balance pressures from various stakeholders--the public wants improved quality, the districts want greater autonomy, and the state budget issues make management of the department difficult.

In addition to the State Board of Education, other state boards, councils, commissions, and task forces are involved. For example, the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development was created under the Mississippi Education Reform Act of 1982 and is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding standards for the preparation, licensure, and continuing professional development of those who teach or perform tasks of an educational nature.

The Legislature exercises its authority through the budget process and through the adoption of mandates related to education. For example, in April 2009, the Mississippi Legislature signed the Children First Act into law. The intent was to increase accountability and strengthen academic achievement. This act has the greatest impact on failing school districts, including possible removal of superintendents and school board members of underperforming districts. MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-7-301 et seq. (1972) sets out the general powers and duties of local school boards.

Finally, community, parents, and children play an important role in the status of education. Research has shown that community and family involvement affect educational outcomes (e. g., higher academic performance, enrollment in post-graduate programs). The National Education Association notes that researchers often cite parent-family-community involvement as essential in addressing the dropout rate. Further, solid school-family-community partnerships lead to higher motivation and higher goals for students.

Multiple, Disjointed Mandates Consume Staff Time and Impede Focus

Disjointed accountability mandates account for a significant amount of MDE staff time and ultimately could impede the ability of MDE to focus on the effectiveness of the department's programs.

MDE currently must respond to multiple accountability mandates. According to the department, it must provide seventeen reports required by state law. Examples of these reports include Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program reports (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-159-3 [1972]), the Superintendent's Annual Report (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-3-11 (k) [1972]), and the Mississippi Report Card (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-3-53 [1972]).

In addition, the federal government requires information related to various requirements of such laws as No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. These reports are intended to provide accountability (e. g., "adequate yearly progress" as defined by No Child Left Behind); however, the numerous reporting requirements account for a significant amount of MDE staff time. As a result, much of the MDE staff must focus on complying with reporting mandates as opposed to focusing on improving programs and activities.

Education policy has advanced historically through incremental or trial-and-error stages; consequently, accountability in education is a very dynamic and fluid concept, with multiple layers or definitions of accountability at various levels (federal, state, and local) as well as in the context of multiple reforms and restructuring. Each level of accountability is accompanied by its own set of respective mandates and reporting requirements that, while applicable to individual programs or activities, generally are not coordinated or connected to each other. This disjointed system of accountability impedes the Department of Education's and Board of Education's ability to establish the overall effectiveness and outcomes of educational programs and activities.

Accountability in education itself is multi-faceted, involving responsibility, authority, evaluation, and control.

There are multiple sources of accountability within the field of education, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *bureaucratic:* a hierarchical structure and superior-subordinate relationships enforce compliance with rules and regulations;
- *legal:* statutes direct compliance and obtain redress for violations;
- *professional:* review by professional peers using the standard of accepted or best practice within the profession; and,
- *political:* democratic control to influence and constrain the use of authority by elected officials.

In addition to having multiple sources of accountability, each one may have its own definition for what being "held accountable" means. Many of the common methods to ensure accountability include performance reporting for a particular program or activity, monitoring and compliance with standards and/or regulations, and incentive systems that reward those districts or schools that are high-performing while imposing more stringent requirements for those that are performing poorly or are at risk.

These common methods of accountability may be applied to two major systems of accountability--procedural and consequential. *Procedural* accountability is more descriptive and focuses on the process and the outputs that occur through programs and activities, such as the number of participants or the total funding available. *Consequential* accountability is more evaluative and focuses on the outcomes or products of the processes and procedures. Consequential accountability is utilized to obtain a broader depiction of how effective or efficient a particular program of activity is, such as the retention rate of new teachers recruited though a program.

Typically, the accountability system utilized within the MDE is procedural. As a result, some reporting mandates do not require the critical information with which to demonstrate effectiveness of programs and thus help the board in its decisionmaking. PEER found instances in which reports did not provide such critical information. For example,

- MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-19-7 (1972) only requires the Beginning Teacher Mentoring Program to report on the number of beginning teachers who receive mentoring services by school. No information is included within the report that links the effectiveness of this program to teacher quality, teacher retention, or student performance. This reporting mandate does not require the critical information needed.

- The report prepared on the status of the Teach for America Delta program for 2009 did not include an actual retention rate as required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-160-7 (c) (1972). Also, the report did not include any information regarding retention beyond the length of participation within the program for participants in Mississippi or any information regarding the percentage of students within each school district served by a program participant teacher. This reporting mandate does not require the critical information needed.
- MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-149-1 (4) (d) (1972) requires that a report on the status of implementation of the Troops to Teachers program address the need for continuation of the program; the 2009 report did not include that information.

Opportunity: Advocate for Unified Reporting Mandates Based on Meaningful Outcome Measures

The Board of Education, working through MDE, should present the Legislature with suggestions for improving statewide reporting mandates. *(See page 85).*

How Accountability Tools are Used

By adopting a performance management approach, MDE could greatly increase its ability to align its resources and operations to desired results. Also, the board could increase its ability to make sound, results-oriented policy decisions. In adopting this approach, the board and the department should utilize tools already available (e. g., strategic planning).

This chapter includes a discussion of how MDE could utilize the concept of performance management to improve its focus on producing results. In the context of performance management, the department has certain tools available to it that are essential for the board to hold the department accountable. These tools are:

- the Office of Educational Accountability;
- strategic planning;
- resource allocation and organizational structure;
- measurement and reporting; and,
- data systems and research.

Elements and Benefits of Performance Management

A performance management approach would use evidence from measurement to inform planning, budgeting, and operations and ultimately affect results.

In 2010, the National Performance Management Advisory Commission produced *A Performance Management Framework for State and Local Government* for the purpose of helping government entities improve their focus on producing results. The commission maintains that performance management is becoming the new standard for public-sector management and has expanded the meaning of accountability. Rather than a process approach to accountability (i. e., ensuring appropriate controls through effective processes), performance management takes into account the achievement of results.

The commission notes that governments are under pressure to provide results despite limited resources. By practicing performance management, agencies and their leaders can apply objective information to management and policy making to improve results. Performance management in the public sector is defined as:

> *. . .an ongoing, systematic approach to improving results through evidence-based*

> *decision making, continuous organizational learning, and a focus on accountability for performance. Performance management is integrated into all aspects of an organization's management and policy-making processes, transforming an organization's practices so it is focused on achieving improved results for the public.*

Thus, evidence from measurement may be used to inform planning, budgeting, and operations and ultimately affect results.

The commission identified the following as primary elements of performance management:

- *A planning process that defines the organizational mission and sets organizational priorities that will drive performance.* Long-term objectives, annual targets, and strategies may be set after priorities are established that are consistent with the mission.
- *A process for engaging the public and identifying community needs.* In this process, government should identify the purpose for engaging the public, points in the process at which the public will be involved, how and when information gained from the public will be used, and the specific methods that will be used. (See Appendix C, page 116, particularly the "Stakeholder Analysis" section on page 120.)
- *A budget process that allocates resources according to priorities.* Rather than developing budgets from the previous year's expenditures, funding is allocated according to priorities and information about what actions are effective in reaching the desired results.
- *A measurement process that supports the entire performance management system.* Measures should be integrated horizontally (across processes and boundaries) and vertically (from a community condition level all the way down to the work of departments and employees).
- *Accountability mechanisms*, referring to the obligation a person, group, or organization assumes for the execution of authority and/or the fulfillment of responsibility.
- *A mechanism for collecting, validating, organizing, and storing data* for the purpose of data reliability and availability.
- *A process for analyzing and reporting performance data* so that it is useful to management, policy makers, and the public.

The commission also notes that the benefits of performance management will not be realized without strong leadership and organizational commitment to change. While it could take years for an organization to implement a performance management approach fully, certain elements may be accomplished relatively quickly (e. g., changing the budget process, training employees on data to improve programs).

Further, while the long-term gains of performance management include greater efficiency and more effective use of resources, short-term financial investments are necessary. Specifically, people, expertise, technology, and money are necessary to establish and maintain a system for revising processes, developing measures, and collecting and storing data.

Focus of the Office of Educational Accountability

The Office of Educational Accountability currently focuses more on financial auditing rather than on program accountability, as provided for in Title 37 of the MISSISSIPPI CODE.

Statutory Duties of the Office of Educational Accountability

The Office of Educational Accountability was established through state statute and charged with the responsibilities of monitoring and reviewing the programs and activities provided through MDE, while ensuring to the Board of Education that the department is being held accountable through its programs and resources.

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-151-1 et seq. (1972), the "Mississippi Accountability and Adequate Education Program Act of 1994," required the board and the department to establish the Office of Educational Accountability within MDE.

Clearly, state law designed this office to serve the Board of Education. CODE Section 37-151-9 (1972) provides that the Director of the Office of Educational Accountability is to:

> *. . . hold a position comparable to a deputy superintendent and shall be appointed by the State Board of Education with the advice and consent of the Senate. He shall serve at the will and pleasure of the State Board of Education. . . .*

Section 37-151-9 also states that the Director of the Office of Educational Accountability is to provide reports to the Legislature, Governor, Mississippi Commission on School Accreditation, and State Board of Education and respond to inquiries for information.

The statute also makes the office responsible for monitoring and reviewing programs developed under the Education Reform Act, the Mississippi Adequate Education Program Act of 1994, the Education Enhancement Fund, and subsequent education initiatives. Also, the office is to complete an annual assessment of education reform programs and is to monitor the implementation of Level III accreditation in all school districts.

Also, the office is to:

- develop and maintain a system of communication with school district personnel;
- provide opportunities for public comment on functions of MDE's programs, needed public education services, and innovative suggestions; and,
- assess both positive and negative impact on school districts of new education programs.

In addition to the above duties, MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-3-53 (1972) makes the Office of Educational Accountability responsible for development of the Mississippi Report Card. This is to include collection of student achievement data at the school, district, and state levels; comparison of such data with national standards to identify students' strengths and weaknesses; and reporting the information. The office is to "encourage local school districts and the general public to use the Mississippi Report Card information along with local individual student data to assess the quality of instructional programs and the performance of schools and to plan and implement programs of instructional improvement."

Recent Focus of the Office of Educational Accountability

The Office of Educational Accountability currently functions chiefly as a financial auditing division, with the last comprehensive program assessment being completed in 2002.

According to the Director of the Office of Educational Accountability, since August 3, 2009, the office has provided reports to the State Superintendent and State Board of Education on an as-needed or as-requested basis. The office currently does not routinely submit reports on a monthly basis and has no comprehensive method of regularly reporting the performance of all programs to the board. According to the director, the office only produces reports in response to specific requests.

Appendix D, page 128, lists program assessments that the Office of Educational Accountability has completed since its inception. The most recent assessment of the department's programs and activities was conducted in 2002.

Within the last year, the office has issued targeted reports such as:

- financial audits of specific programs in specific districts;
- a report responding to a financial demand letter;
- a review of MDE's statutorily required annual reports and their respective compliance status;
- a review of the Board of Education's policy manual;
- a recommendation to withdraw a request for proposals for a new Statewide Student Information System that would require $10 to $20 million in state funds to establish and implement; and,
- a review of the implementation of a program in a specific school district.

Based on the types of reports recently generated by the Office of Internal Accountability, PEER concludes that the office currently functions chiefly as a financial auditing division. The director of the office acknowledged that most of the office's reports have focused on audit resolutions (as he stated, more typical of certified public accounting work) and that he would like to see the office perform more program evaluations and assessments.

The director also stated that under the former interim state superintendent, the office began to focus on means for making MDE more efficient in administration. He also stated that this is also a major focus of the current state superintendent and that during the recent reorganization of the department, the superintendent requested the office to focus on efficiencies within the department, primarily looking for ways to save money. Areas in which the office has initially focused include commodities and purchasing.

Opportunity: Refocus the Office of Educational Accountability

The recent reorganization of the Office of Educational Accountability would allow for a shift from financial accountability to increased accountability of MDE programs and resources. The office could then play a critical role in helping the board fulfill its role to hold MDE accountable for programs and resources. *(See page 86.)*

Strategic Planning

By incorporating performance measures, time frames for achievement, programmatic responsibility, and associated resource allocations (both financial and staffing) into MDE's strategic plan, the board would greatly increase its ability to hold the department accountable for the efficient and effective utilization of its resources. It would further help the board for the department to differentiate in its strategic plan between those activities for

which outcomes are under its direct control versus those activities that require implementation by external entities such as school districts to achieve success.

A strategic plan can be an important management tool for helping an organization to achieve its objectives efficiently. When aligned to clear organizational goals, a strategic plan provides a roadmap for achieving those goals through the articulation of strategies, objectives, action steps, and measurable performance indicators. By linking the strategic plan to the organization's allocation of financial and human resources, the strategic plan becomes an even more powerful tool for helping to ensure organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

As discussed on page 34, MDE operates in a complex environment that also complicates its strategic planning efforts. Like the U. S. Department of Education, MDE's operating environment does not fit a traditional planning structure in which most services are under the direct control of the organization. For example, MDE's most important outcome measures (e. g., improving student performance, increasing graduation rates, reducing dropout rates) are highly dependent on the services carried out by 152 individual school districts under the management and control of their own local governing boards.

PEER determined that while MDE has made a good effort at developing a strategic plan, the utility of the plan as a management and accountability tool could be improved by:

- grounding goals and "outcome measures" in research data and stating each in measurable terms with an associated time frame for achievement;
- tying outcome measures and activities to programmatic responsibility and resource allocation (both financial and staffing); and,
- differentiating between outcome measures and activities that are under the direct control of the department versus under the control of external entities.

Importance of Strategic Planning as a Management and Accountability Tool

Strategic planning identifies and defines critical measures of success, helps in making informed decisions regarding resource allocation, and helps in adapting to an ever-changing environment.

Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its vision, mission, and primary goals and then developing strategies (i. e., courses of action) for achieving those goals. The strategic planning process includes making

decisions on the allocation of organizational resources (both financial and staffing) to pursue its strategies.

Appendix C on page 116 contains a more detailed discussion of strategic planning and its potential value to an organization. As noted in the appendix, a strategic plan is not a static document. Proper implementation of strategic planning requires an organization to make necessary adjustments to its strategies and courses of action based on feedback from an ongoing analysis of performance data as well as in reaction to changes in the environment in which it operates.

State Legal Mandates for Strategic Planning and Integration of Resource Allocation into the Strategic Planning Process

State law has three separate mandates for MDE to develop a strategic plan, all of which tie planning to the budgeting process.

State law contains three separate requirements for MDE to develop a strategic plan:

- MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-103-129 (1972) is a general mandate that requires all state agencies submitting an annual budget request to the Legislature to also submit a five-year strategic plan. The CODE section specifies that the plan must include a mission statement as well as performance effectiveness objectives for each of the agency's programs, a description of significant external factors that may affect projected levels of performance, a description of the agency's internal management system utilized to evaluate actual performance relative to targeted performance levels, and an evaluation of the agency's actual performance in relation to its targeted performance levels for the two preceding fiscal years.
- The second mandate for strategic planning, found in MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-3 (1972), while specific to MDE, broadens the planning mandate to not only include the department but the entire state K-12 public education system as well. This law mandates the State Board of Education, with recommendations from the superintendent, to:

  > *. . .design and maintain a five-year plan and program for educational improvement that shall set forth objectives for system performance and development and be the basis for budget requests and legislative initiatives.*

- Similarly, the third mandate for planning by MDE is contained in MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-2 (1972), which sets state policy for K-12 public education in Mississippi. As discussed on page 22,

this section sets broad objectives and high expectations for the state's public education system. With respect to planning, the section states that it is policy of the State of Mississippi to:

> *. . .assure that the budget process, the planning function and the allocation of personnel of the state department of education are commensurate with its educational goals. . . .*

Unique Challenges of Strategic Planning in a Complex Environment

While MDE is charged by law with setting system-wide objectives for K-12 public education in Mississippi, success in achieving these objectives is dependent on a highly fragmented set of critical entities within the system.

By law, the Board of Education is responsible for overseeing the Department of Education as well as the statewide system of educational accountability. The complexity of the Board of Education's responsibility is reflected in MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-3 (1972), which outlines the board's duties and responsibilities. This section of the law directs the board to adopt rules and regulations and set standards and policies for the organization, operation, management, planning, budgeting and programs of MDE as well as to establish and maintain a "system-wide" plan of performance, policy, and directions of public education not otherwise provided for. The CODE section further provides that the board has the responsibility for establishing and overseeing a state system of educational accountability.

As noted in a 1997 report on strategic planning and performance management by the U.S. Department of Education, "The [U.S.] Department [of Education]'s operating environment does not fit a traditional planning structure in which most services are under the direct control of the organization." This description is also highly applicable to MDE. While MDE is charged by law with setting system-wide objectives for K-12 public education in Mississippi, success in achieving these objectives is dependent on a highly fragmented set of critical entities within the system, as discussed on page 22. Critical actors in the system include, but are not limited to, individual students, their families, the general citizenry, and educators and administrators operating under the control of 152 separate local school boards.

To further complicate MDE's planning environment, 97% of the funding for K-12 public education (e. g., Mississippi Adequate Education Program [MAEP] funds, federal funds) is subject to external controls from the funding source.

The challenge for MDE is to determine how it can best utilize the resources that are under its direct control (see discussion on page 42).

MDE's Current Strategic Planning Efforts

In response to legal mandates, MDE has developed a strategic plan as well as budget and performance measures at the "program" level in accordance with MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-103-129 (1972). Unfortunately, as with many agencies, the two efforts are not linked, which greatly limits the board's ability to use MDE's strategic plan as a management and accountability tool.

The following section describes MDE's strategic planning and performance measurement efforts.

System Goals Do Not Appear to Be Research-Based

Based on available data relative to MDE's three system goals, it is not apparent that they are research-based.

As stated in the introductory section of MDE's *Five-Year Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2011-2015*:

> *The Mississippi Board of Education has established a bold vision and mission for the Mississippi Department of Education that will dramatically improve K-12 education in Mississippi over the next five years.*

The department's stated vision is:

> *. . .to create a world-class education system that gives students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be successful in college and the workforce and flourish as parents and citizens.*

The department's stated mission is:

> *. . .to provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global economy.*

Pursuant to its role in providing leadership for the state's system of K-12 public education, the board adopted the following three system goals. The purpose of these goals is to help focus efforts of all actors in the system:

- *Goal 1: to mobilize resources and supports to help ensure that all students exit Third Grade reading on grade level by 2020;*
- *Goal 2: to reduce the dropout rate to 13% by 2013; and,*

- *Goal 3: to reach the national average on national assessments by 2013.*

While MDE should set its goals to challenge those involved in the state's K-12 public education to stretch their capabilities, the department should not set goals based on wishful thinking with no basis in historical data to support the goal. Such goals are more likely to de-motivate actors in the system because of the likely failure to achieve the goals.

Based on available data relative to MDE's three system goals, it is not apparent that they are research based. For example, at the time that MDE set a goal of reaching the national average on national assessments by 2013, the state ranked last on national assessments in both reading and math.

Such unreasonably high expectations might be a reflection of a portion of the state policy for education in MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-2 (g) (1972), which states:

> *That excellence and high achievement of all students should be the ultimate goal.*

Further, Section 37-1-2 (e) states:

> *To improve the quality of education by strengthening it and elevating its goals.*

However, MDE should strive to set realistic goals that motivate staff toward achieving the goals.

Lack of Interim Progress Goals

MDE has not established interim progress goals for two of its three system goals to show expected levels of progress toward the achievement of the end goals in upcoming years.

Interim progress goals help to provide accountability for performance by showing where an organization needs to be at various points in time in order to achieve its target goal by the date specified. While MDE has set interim progress goals for achieving its target goal of reducing the dropout rate to 13 percent by 2013, it has not set interim progress goals for its other two primary target goals.

According to MDE's 2009 *Dropout Prevention Year End Report*, the dropout rate for the full cohort of students beginning with ninth graders in school year 2004/2005 (i.e., the 2008 graduating class) was 16 percent. In its annual dropout prevention presentation to the board in November 2009, MDE listed the following interim progress dropout rate goals for 2009 through 2013:

- 2008-09 15.6%
- 2009-10 15%

- 2010-11 14.3%
- 2011-12 13.7%
- 2012-13 13%

According to data from MDE's Office of Research and Statistics, the actual dropout rate as of June 2010 was 17.1%, over 1% higher than the actual rate when the target goal of 13% by 2013 was set. This type of information should alert the board and the department that current activities designed to reduce the dropout rate are not as effective as anticipated and some change in implementation, strategies, and/or action steps may be warranted to get the department back on track toward achieving its goal.

MDE has not set interim progress goals to help ensure that all students exit third grade reading on grade level by 2020. According to Mississippi Curriculum Test results for 2008-09, only 48 percent of students scored proficient (i.e., at grade level or above) in third grade language arts. The department believes that because it increased the rigor of its academic standards in 2006-07, it has not collected enough data with the new standards in place to be able to set expected interim levels of achievement for moving the percentage of third grade students reading at grade level from 48% to 100%. However, as discussed previously, without such data, the department did not have a legitimate basis for setting a target goal date of 2020.

Similarly, MDE has not set interim progress goals for meeting the system goal of reaching the national average on national assessments by 2013. In 2009 Mississippi ranked last on national assessments for reading and math in the fourth and eighth grades. The type of improvement that would be required to move from last to the average on national assessments in five years would be highly unlikely.

Tying Goals to the "National Average"

To tie goals and outcome measures to "meeting the national average" is to try to hit a constantly moving target over which the state has no control.

The "national average" of any educational measure is a constantly moving target over which the state has no control. As Mississippi students improve their achievement levels, in general so do students in other states. Therefore, the board and the department should refrain from tying system goals and outcome measures to "meeting the national average."

Opportunities: Goal Setting

The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by establishing realistic goals based on research data (see page 87), establishing interim progress goals for all three system goals (see page 87), and refraining from tying goals and outcome measures to national averages and national assessments (see page 87).

MDE's Strategies, Outcome Measures, and Action Steps Need Improvement

MDE's strategic plan identifies the following five strategies to achieve the three "bold goals:"

- *Implement ongoing, comprehensive reform in the areas of instruction, curriculum, assessment design and accountability systems for all grade levels, from early education through graduation.*
- *Increase the quantity and quality of teachers.*
- *Increase the quantity and quality of administrators.*
- *Create a culture in Mississippi that understands the value of education.*
- *Redesign education for the 21st Century workforce in Mississippi.*

As shown in Appendix E on page 129, MDE's strategic plan includes thirty-nine "outcome measures" for gauging the success of its five strategies. For example, the fourth outcome measure for the first strategy is "All Mississippi students will demonstrate a growing proficiency in reading and will meet the national average in reading within the next decade."

In addition, the plan includes several action steps under each "outcome measure." For example, the fourth outcome measure under Strategy 1 includes the following action steps:

- *Provide extensive professional development for teachers, administrators, and support staff;*
- *Provide technical assistance and funding to low performing school districts;*
- *Provide technical assistance in the implementation of a student progress monitoring system for the collection and management of data related to student progress in mastering reading competencies at each grade level;*

- *Provide training for the Three-Tier Response to Intervention process.*[4]
- *Develop and provide training on language arts curriculum guides for grades K-12.*

MDE's strategic plan includes the status of each action step. The majority of status entries are stated in the following terms: "in progress," "completed," or "completed and ongoing."

Outcome Measures

Thirty-six of the department's thirty-nine outcome measures are stated in terms that cannot be measured as written.

The purpose of an outcome measure is to provide a gauge of the degree to which an organization is achieving the intended end results of its actions. Unlike input and process measures, which focus on the resources that an organization is committing to an activity and the number of persons that these resources are serving (e. g., the number of children participating in a research-based reading program), outcome measures focus on whether the activities are working to achieve a desired result (e. g., whether those children participating in the program are achieving statistically significant increases in reading scores over those children who did not participate in the program). Outcome measures are key to gauging an organization's effectiveness.

Only three of the department's thirty-nine outcome measures include all of the components necessary to hold the department accountable for its performance on these measures. All three of these measures are attached to the department's fifth strategy (i. e., "redesign education for the 21st century workforce in Mississippi"):

- The dropout rate for grades 9-12 will be reduced to 13% by 2012-2013. (See discussion of the problem with confusion of MDE terms [goals, strategies, outcome measures] on page 40);
- The truancy rate for grades 9-12 will be reduced by 50% by 2012-2013. (This measure should be restated to include the actual and targeted truancy rates--i. e., reduced by 50% from x rate to x rate, so that an outside party clearly understands the measure without having to obtain additional information.); and,
- The graduation rate for each four-year high school cohort will increase to 85 percent by 2018-2019.

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[4] The *Three-Tier Response to Intervention* process is a framework for monitoring students' attainment of skills and responding to any lack of progress with appropriate intervention.

The remaining thirty-six measures are missing information critical to the board's ability to hold the department accountable for performance on the measures. For example, the department's first outcome measure listed under its first strategy states that "All children will demonstrate appropriate readiness skills upon exiting kindergarten." The measure should state the level of achievement that all children are expected to reach on a specific test by a specific date (e. g., for each academic year included in the plan, increase the percentage of children scoring proficient on the Mississippi Curriculum Test by five percent and state the targeted percentages).

To cite another example of an MDE outcome measure that is stated in terms that cannot be measured as written, the third measure under the second strategy states: "Encourage college students to pursue a degree and teach in Mississippi classrooms." The measure should specify a targeted percentage increase in the number of college graduates becoming K-12 public school teachers in Mississippi--from x number at x point in time to x number by x date. Until MDE revises its outcome measures to be measurable, the board cannot gauge the department's effectiveness in achieving its desired outcomes.

The reader should refer to the performance measures section on page 61 and the opportunities section on page 92 for more discussion of MDE performance measures and how those measures could be improved.

Opportunity: Convert Outcome Measures to Measurable Terms

The department could improve its strategic planning by converting outcome measures to measurable terms. (See page 88.)

Confusion in Use of Strategic Planning Terms

The lack of clear differentiation between the department's strategies, goals, and outcome measures inhibits accountability by failing to ensure that the critical components of strategic planning are in place (i. e., measurable and research-based goals, strategies for achieving the goals, activities for carrying out the strategies, and outcome-based measures of success in carrying out the strategies).

The department's strategic plan indicates some confusion over strategic planning nomenclature, which inhibits accountability by failing to ensure that every goal includes ways of achieving the goal and ways of measuring success in achieving the desired results. Strategic planning requires the setting of measurable and research-based goals for the organization, identification of strategies for achieving each of the goals, identification of action steps pursuant to each strategy, and the establishment of outcome-based measures of success in carrying out the strategies. These components of a strategic plan are

hierarchical in nature; therefore, an outcome-based measure for a strategy should not be the same as the goal that the strategy is designed to help achieve.

The department's strategic plan violates this hierarchy in several instances. For example, two of the department's "outcome measures" are the same as two of its goals, as shown in the cells in bold font of Appendix E on page 129 (outcome measure 2 for strategy 1--exiting the third grade at third grade reading level--and outcome measure 3 for strategy 5--reducing the dropout rate).

Other outcome measures are virtually the same as the department's strategies--e. g., Strategy 1 ("implement ongoing, comprehensive reform in the areas of. . .assessment design. . .") and outcome measure 9 ("Implement a comprehensive assessment system to increase student achievement"); Strategy 3 ("increase the quantity and quality of administrators") and outcome measure 4 ("there will be an adequate pool of highly qualified administrators to lead Mississippi schools").

Opportunity: Improve Consistency in Use of Strategic Planning Terms

The department could improve its strategic planning by improving consistency in designation of objectives as goals, strategies, or outcome measures. (See page 88.)

Linking Strategies to Goals

The department has not clearly linked its five strategies to its three system goals.

Some of the confusion in the department's strategic plan could be due to the fact that the plan does not include strategies specific to each of its three major goals. Rather, the department has established three "bold goals" and then laid out strategies presumably designed to address all three goals simultaneously.

By creating strategies and outcome measures structured around a specific goal, the board would be in a better position to have the information necessary to know whether the department is on track to achieve its goal and if not, what needs to be done to alter its strategy and/or to acknowledge failure on achieving the first goal and set a more realistic goal.

Opportunity: Develop Specific Strategies for Achieving Each of the Bold Goals

To target its resources more effectively, the department should consider developing specific strategies (supported by action steps and measurable objectives ["outcome measures"] and timeframes) for achieving each of its three bold goals and report to the board at least annually on the progress being made toward achievement of each goal and each measurable objective for each of its strategies and on the costs associated with making the progress. *(See page 89.)*

Differentiating Between Activities under the Department's Direct Control Versus Those Under the Control of an External Entity

Because MDE does not clearly differentiate between activities under the department's control and those under the control of external entities in the strategic planning process, it is unclear as to what entity is responsible and for what results.

Given the complex environment of K-12 public education, the U. S. Department of Education's 1997 report on strategic planning aptly observes that "a challenge for performance measurement in education is to generate multi-level and appropriately disaggregated indicators." Managing organizations such as the U. S. Department of Education and MDE "requires information on each type of provider in addition to overall system-level results."

To assess its own effectiveness, the U. S. Department of Education utilizes a performance measurement scheme that differentiates between *direct* and *indirect* measures of performance. Direct measures focus on the department's administrative functions and indirect measures focus on the effects of the department's work on systems (schools, school districts, state agencies) and people.

Examples of the U. S. Department of Education's direct measures include the following: department meets key deadline, department completes key action, compliance with federal requirements. Examples of indirect measures of the department's effects on systems include the following: increase or improve services to students, allocate funds to neediest populations, establish effective collaborations. Examples of indirect measures of the department's effects on people include the following: improve educational or social outcomes for program participants, overall target population, teachers, families, and communities.

One of MDE's primary responsibilities is to administer federal grant program funds. For some programs, MDE has no discretion and is merely a conduit for the flow of funds to school districts. Determining what entity is

accountable and for what results would be relatively simple for such ministerial duties. For other programs, however, MDE has the added responsibility of choosing grant recipients based on certain factors (e. g., best performers). It is imperative that levels of accountability for these duties be determined during the strategic planning process so that results may be attributed to those responsible.

Opportunity: Identify What is Under the Department's Control

The department should differentiate between outcome measures and activities that are under its direct control versus those under the control of external entities (see page 90).

Resource Allocation and Organizational Structure

Because the Department of Education's budget is not linked to its strategic plan, the board is unable to make fully informed decisions regarding the commitment of departmental resources.

One of the seven principles of performance management (refer to discussion on page 28) is the alignment of resources (financial and staffing) with priorities and desired results. The lack of alignment between the department's strategic plan (containing MDE's goals, priorities, activities, and desired results), program responsibility, and allocation of resources is at the heart of the board's difficulties in trying to hold the department accountable.

State Law Mandates Performance-Based Budgeting

The Mississippi Performance Budget and Strategic Planning Act of 1994 requires agencies' budget requests to include financial, staffing, and performance data by program and to be accompanied by a five-year strategic plan.

The alignment of an organization's budget with its strategic plan is at the core of performance-based budgeting, which was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature through passage of the Mississippi Performance Budget and Strategic Planning Act of 1994 (see MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-103-129 [1972]). At the time of passage of the act, state policy makers viewed performance-based budgeting as an important tool for helping to ensure the efficient and effective utilization of public resources. Performance-based budgeting was seen as a dramatic improvement over traditional line-item budgeting, which bases resource allocation on broad categories of expenditure (e. g., personal services, contractual services) and tends to be incremental in

nature, based on previous years' expenditures rather than based on evidence of what is being accomplished with the organization's financial resources.

The Mississippi Performance Budget and Strategic Planning Act of 1994 requires each agency submitting an annual budget request to the Legislative Budget Office to break down the request by program and to include financial and staffing information as well as performance data for each program. The act also requires the agency to submit a five-year strategic plan with its budget request.

This act has never achieved its full potential because most agencies have difficulty in developing meaningful indicators of performance and most agencies view their budgets and strategic plans as two separate legislative mandates rather than as a unified mandate to allocate agency resources according to the priorities, strategies, outcomes, programs, and activities laid out in their strategic plans.

Constraints on the Board's Allocation of Resources

Approximately 97% of Mississippi's funding for K-12 public education is subject to external controls from the funding sources. This leaves MDE with about 3% of its funding for meeting numerous mandates established in state law.

Each year, MDE submits five separate budget requests to the Legislature: General Education, Chickasaw School Fund, Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP), Vocational Education, and Deaf and Blind Schools. MDE's five FY 2011 budget requests totaled $3,592,013,002 for 894 full-time equivalent positions. (The total amount actually appropriated for FY 2011 was $3,156,511,726.)

It is important to note that the board does not have unfettered control over the allocation of these resources. In fact, if the full amount that the department requested had been appropriated during FY 2011, approximately 97% of the funds MDE requested would be directed to specific uses by the entity providing the funds. More specifically:

- approximately $2.2 billion (62%) of the funds requested by MDE for FY 2011 are funds that will be transferred to the local school districts by MDE through the state's Mississippi Adequate Education Program;
- federal funds from numerous sources, each with their own spending constraints, represent approximately $797 million (22%) of the funds requested by the department for FY 2011;
- non-federal special funds, also from numerous sources, each with their own spending constraints,

represent approximately $345 million (10%) of the funds the department requested for FY 2011;

- state general funds designated for specific purposes (i. e., Chickasaw School Fund, operation of the state's four special schools, vocational education, and school attendance officers) represent approximately $109 million (3%) of the funds that the department requested for FY 2011.

This would leave approximately $120 million (3%) of the funds MDE requested for FY 2011 for meeting numerous other mandates established for the department in state law (e. g., implementing and maintaining a state program of educational accountability and assessment of performance of local school districts; issuing required annual reports such as a report of expenditures for public schools, by category of expenditure; assembling data; conducting studies and surveys; and sponsoring research and development activities designed to provide information about educational needs and the effect of alternative educational practices). (See pages 24 through 26 for a discussion of other mandates.)

Problems with MDE's Budget Requests from a Performance Accountability Standpoint

Because of the manner in which the department has structured its budget requests, the board cannot determine whether the department's resource allocations are achieving intended results or who is accountable for the results.

From a performance accountability standpoint, problems with MDE's budget request include:

- lack of a comprehensive and integrated list of MDE "programs;"
- overly broad content of some MDE "programs;"
- poor program performance measures; and,
- poor linkage between MDE's budget requests and its strategic plan.

As a result, the board cannot determine whether the department's resource allocations are achieving intended results or who is accountable for the results.

Lack of Comprehensive and Integrated List of MDE "Programs"

The lack of a comprehensive and integrated list of MDE "programs" tied to the department's strategic plan leads to confusion among board members who are trying to hold the department accountable through its "programs."

MDE's budget requests include twenty-three "programs" for purposes of budgeting and performance reporting and 170 General Education "programs" for purposes of cost accounting.

The lack of a comprehensive and integrated list of MDE "programs" tied to the department's strategic plan leads to confusion among board members who are trying to hold the department accountable through its "programs."

MDE's General Education budget request contains FY 2011 revenue estimates for ninety-two federal fund programs and seventy-eight special (non-federal) fund "programs." Examples of "programs" included in this list of federal and non-federal fund programs are: Even Start Family Literacy, Americorps, Reading First-LEA (Local Education Agency), Healthy Kids/Healthy America, and Committed to Move. Each "program" included in this list is a cost center that the department must account for separately due to restrictions governing the utilization of the funds. These "programs" account for 88% ($926.5 million) of MDE's $1.05 billion General Education funding request for FY 2011.

In addition to this first list of 170 General Education "programs," the department presents its five budget requests by the twenty-three "programs" listed in Exhibit 8, page 47.

While MDE staff can tie its first list of 170 General Education "programs" to its second list of thirteen General Education "programs" (in fact, a summary request is presented, by funding source, for the thirteen programs as shown in Exhibit 9 on page 49), the first list is not categorized to indicate which of the thirteen programs the 170 programs belong to.

To further complicate matters, the long list of "programs" contained in MDE's budget requests (i. e., those listed in Exhibit 8, page 47) is not even exhaustive. Numerous other "programs" appear in state law and other MDE documents with no linkage to the "programs" contained in MDE's budget request. Examples of MDE programs established in state law include:

- the State Program of Educational Accountability and Assessment of Performance;
- the Mississippi Basic Skills Assessment Program;
- the public school reporting system called the "Mississippi Report Card;" and,

Exhibit 8: Program Names by MDE Budget Request

Budget Request	"Program"
General Education Budget Request:	Special Education
	Child Nutrition
	Special Projects
	Industrial Training
	Supportive Services
	Mississippi School for Math and Science
	Educational Accountability
	Educational Training and Development
	Compensatory Education
	Community and Outreach Services
	Educational Technology
	Mississippi School Attendance Officers
	Mississippi Teacher Center
Chickasaw School Fund Budget Request:	Chickasaw School Fund
MAEP Budget Request:	Basic Program
	Add-on Programs
	Debt Service
Vocational Education Budget Request:	Secondary Programs
	Post-secondary Programs
	Agencies and Institutions
Schools for the Deaf and Blind Budget Request:	Instruction
	Student Services
	Operations and Maintenance

SOURCE: Mississippi Department of Education Budget Request for FY 2011.

- the Alliance for Families program, established for the purpose of mobilizing public and parental support for education and after-school mentoring programs, referred to as the Support Our Students (S.O.S.) program.

Examples of other MDE programs referenced in certain action steps of the department's strategic plan include:

- Project Stream for delivering professional development for math teachers;
- Cognitive Coaching Programs for developing leader thinking;
- Mississippi School Administrator Sabbatical Program;
- Mississippi Reading Reform Model; and,
- Three-Tier Response to Intervention.

These lengthy and poorly integrated lists of MDE "programs" lead to the board's frustration over its difficulty in holding the department accountable for "programs on top of programs."

The sections that follow discuss problems with the list of twenty-three MDE "programs" in Exhibit 8 on page 47, as these are the programs to which the department's funding requests and performance indicators are tied.

Programs That are Too Broadly Defined

Some of the twenty-three "programs" included in MDE's budget request are too broad to be meaningfully linked to the strategic plan.

While MDE does not link its budget to its strategic plan, PEER attempted to link the two documents by placing programs with responsibilities related to a strategy or goal under the appropriate strategy or goal (refer to Exhibit 10 on page 50). PEER had difficulty placing some of the programs under the appropriate strategy because of the broad nature of the programs. (See page 38 for the department's strategies.)

For example, MDE's "special projects" program includes the classroom instructional materials fund (which might support the department's first strategy) as well as the safe and orderly schools program (which is not clearly linked to any of the department's five strategies). Also, MDE's "educational training and development" program includes teacher training (supporting Strategy 3), administrator training (supporting Strategy 2), and the development of materials directly affecting instruction (supporting Strategy 1).

Exhibit 9: MDE General Education Funding Requested for FY 2011, by Program and Funding Source

	Funding Requested for FY 2011, by Funding Source				
General Education Program	General	Federal	State Supp. Special	Other Special	Total
Special Education	$ 16,078,051	$ 118,779,547		$ 755,374	$ 135,612,972
Child Nutrition	$ 2,986,085	$ 208,529,747		$ 6,676,917	$ 218,192,749
Special Projects	$ 10,633,583	$ 78,961,094	$ 85,953,462	$ 36,913,311	$ 212,461,450
Industrial Training	$ 624,064				$ 624,064
Supportive Services	$ 8,073,491	$ 1,179,096		$ 4,520,562	$ 13,773,149
Mississippi School for Math & Science	$ 4,092,418			$ 1,000,000	$ 5,092,418
Educational Accountability	$ 21,660,745	$ 7,583,141	$ 501,350	$ 17,500	$ 29,762,736
Educational Training & Development	$ 44,747,031	$ 184,312,443	$ 125,000	$ 6,981,300	$ 236,165,774
Compensatory Education	$ 39,300	$ 171,012,948			$ 171,052,248
Community & Outreach Services	$ 602	$ 1,396,803		$ 50,585	$ 1,447,990
Educational Technology	$ 5,493,122	$ 6,740,773	$ 94,082	$ 776,991	$ 13,104,968
Missisippi School Attendance Officers	$ 7,456,784			$ 12,300	$ 7,469,084
Mississippi Teacher Center	$ 6,239,923	$ 1,550,879		$ 2,024,052	$ 9,814,854
TOTAL	$ 128,125,199	$ 780,046,471	$ 86,673,894	$ 59,728,892	$1,054,574,456

SOURCE: MDE General Education Budget Request for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011.

Exhibit 10: PEER's Attempt to Link Programs Included in MDE's FY 2011 Budget Request to its Strategic Plan, Including the Following Data for Each Program: Total Dollars Requested, Total FTEs, and Contractual Service Dollars Requested

MDE Budget	Budget Program	Total $ Requested	FTEs	Contractual Services $ Requested
Strategy 1: Implement ongoing, comprehensive reform in the areas of instruction, curriculum, assessment design and accountability systems for all grade levels, from early education through graduation.				
Gen. Ed.	Educational Accountability	$ 29,762,736	59	$ 24,230,784
Gen. Ed.	*Educational Training & Dvlpmt.*	$ 236,165,774	67	$ 9,074,009
Gen. Ed.	Special Education	$ 135,612,972	62	$ 3,591,845
Gen. Ed.	Compensatory Education	$ 171,052,248	52	$ 666,879
Sub-total		$ 572,593,730	240	$ 37,563,517
Strategy 2: Increase the quantity and quality of teachers.				
Gen. Ed.	Teacher Center	$ 9,814,854	14	$ 1,356,865
Strategy 3: Increase the quantity and quality of administrators.				
Strategy 4: Create a culture in Mississippi that understands the value of education.				
Strategy 5: Redesign education for the 21st century workforce in Mississippi.				
Gen. Ed.	Industrial Training	$ 624,064	0	$ -
Gen. Ed.	Educational Technology	$ 13,104,968	2	$ 5,850,810
Voc. Ed.	Secondary Programs	$ 71,401,362	31.7	$ 2,043,272
Voc. Ed.	Post-secondary Programs	$ 35,822,295	27.7	$ 220,545
Voc. Ed.	Agencies & Institutions	$ 4,638,265	2.69	$ 17,709
Sub-total		$ 125,590,954	64	$ 8,132,336
Goal without a Strategy: Reduce Dropout Rate to 13% by 2013				
Gen. Ed.	School Attendance Officers	$ 7,469,084	154	$ 253,450
Total resources requested that can be linked to strategic plan		$ 715,468,622	472	$ 47,306,168
Note: Programs noted in italics serve multiple strategies (see discussion on page 54).				

Note: Numbers may vary slightly from actual totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: MDE FY 2011 budget requests and PEER analysis.

Poor Program Performance Measures Included in MDE's Budget Request

Rather than focusing on true program outcomes, MDE's program performance indicators are input- and process-oriented.

PEER found significant problems with the usefulness of the performance indicators included in MDE's budget request in determining program effectiveness. Rather than focusing on true program outcomes, MDE's program performance indicators are input- and process-oriented (e.g., amount of funds distributed and counts of the number of: children served, meals served, sites visited, administrators trained, districts assisted).

Although most of the programs have reported "outcome" measures, none of the General Education program measures reported are true measures of program outcome and none tie to outcome measures included in MDE's strategic plan. Further, three of MDE's General Education programs (industrial training, supportive services, and educational technology) report no performance measures.

The department's lack of focus on outcome measures is even apparent in the General Education programs most directly linked to the department's goals of improving student performance and reducing the dropout rate. For example, the stated purpose of MDE's compensatory education program is "to provide compensatory educational services to students who are achieving below average as compared to their peers." The outcome measures listed by the department in its budget request are: "Title I programs awarded" and "Review and approve delinquent projects." These measures cannot be used to determine the effectiveness of MDE's compensatory educational services in improving the academic performance of students receiving the services.

Similarly, the stated objective of the department's Mississippi School Attendance Officer program is "to reduce 'unlawful absences' of compulsory-school-age children from school and to ensure attendance of school-age children in an approved educational setting." The department has elected to report on the following three "outcome" measures for this program: the number of presentations made by school attendance officers to organizations, the percentage of information disseminated to attendance officers by computer, and the percentage of improvement in methods of communicating collected data. These measures are not helpful to management in trying to determine whether the activities of the attendance officers are effective in reducing unlawful absences.

Likewise, the objective of the Mississippi Teacher Center is "to attract qualified teachers to school districts with

special emphasis on geographical areas of the state where a critical teacher shortage exists." The department reports the following "outcomes" for its Teacher Center: number of teachers served by the center and number of students receiving critical needs scholarships. Once again, the board is unable to determine the success of the center in increasing the number of highly qualified teachers teaching in Mississippi's public schools, especially in geographical teacher shortage areas, from the program performance data reported to it.

The reader should refer to the performance measures section on page 61 and the opportunities section on page 92 for more discussion of MDE performance measures and how those measures can be improved.

Poor Linkage Between MDE's Budget Request and Strategic Plan

Half of MDE's programs included in the budget request do not have a clear link to the department's strategic plan.

As discussed on page 46, MDE's strategic plan does not specify programmatic responsibility for the strategies, action steps, and outcome measures included in the plan; therefore, there is no linkage between the two documents.

As shown in Exhibit 10 on page 50, PEER attempted to link MDE's budget with its strategic plan (and goals) by placing programs with responsibilities related to a strategy or goal under the appropriate strategy or goal. In the exhibit, PEER also included the following components of the FY 2011 budget request for each program because PEER believes that the inclusion of this information is potentially useful to the board:

- total dollars;
- contractual service dollars; and,
- total FTEs.

While PEER was able to link eleven of MDE's programs to strategies (accounting for $715.5 million of MDE's FY 2011 budget request [including $47.3 million in contractual services] and 472 FTEs), the remaining twelve MDE programs (accounting for $2.9 billion of MDE's FY 2011 budget request [including $13 million in contractual services] and 422 FTEs) do not have a clear link to the department's strategic plan. (See Exhibit 11, page 53.) Excluding MAEP funding and the Chickasaw School Fund, there is still $464 million in MDE's budget request that is not clearly linked to the plan. Further, one of the department's five strategies ("creating a culture in Mississippi that values education") has no clear program responsibility and the program responsibility for another strategy ("increasing the quantity and quality of

administrators") is included in a broader program with other responsibilities (see discussion on page 48).

Exhibit 11: Programs Included in MDE's FY 2011 Budget Request that PEER was Unable to Link to the Department's Strategic Plan, Including the Following Data for Each Program: Total Dollars Requested, Total FTEs, and Contractual Service Dollars Requested

Budget Unit	Program	FY 2011 Request	FTEs	Contractual Services $
Gen. Ed.	Child Nutrition	$ 218,192,749	47	$ 1,762,608
Gen. Ed.	Special Projects	$ 212,461,450	56	$ 3,938,745
Gen. Ed.	Supportive Services	$ 13,773,149	90	$ 5,103,883
Gen. Ed.	School for Math & Science	$ 5,092,418	0	$ -
Gen. Ed.	Community and Outreach Serv.	$ 1,447,990	5	$ 186,198
Chickasaw	Chickasaw School Fund	$ 14,515,760	0	$ -
MAEP	Basic	$ 1,900,072,802	0	$ 197,015
	Add-on	$ 447,937,521	0	$ 5,015
	Debt Service	$ 50,000,000	0	$ -
Deaf & Blind Sch	Instruction	$ 6,639,395	112	$ 210,776
	Student Services	$ 3,116,612	86	$ 57,404
	Operation & Maint.	$ 3,294,534	26	$ 1,558,191
Total resources requested that can't be linked to strategic plan		$ 2,876,544,380	422	$ 13,019,835

SOURCE: MDE FY 2011 budget requests and PEER analysis.

In order to make fully informed decisions regarding the commitment of MDE resources, the board should know the amount of dollars, by funding source, being expended on each of the outcome measures and action steps listed in its five-year strategic plan as well as the number of FTEs committed to each and the locus of programmatic responsibility. This information could be communicated to the board by adding appropriate columns to MDE's strategic plan. Providing financial information to the board by action step and outcome measure would necessitate the development of an activity-based costing model for the department.

Lack of Linkage Between Strategic Plan, Budget Programs, and Organization Structure

The allocation of an organization's human resources is as important to its success as the allocation of its financial resources. Currently, there is no clear linkage between MDE's strategic plan, the twenty-three programs included in its budget requests, and its organization structure.

Recent MDE Reorganization

MDE has recently undergone reorganization in an effort to alleviate some concerns that MDE is a top-heavy organization and to reduce the number of staff, simplify the organizational structure, and introduce new, strong leadership. Also, a new division named School Improvement, Oversight and Recovery was created to place more of a focus on assisting low-performing schools.

As noted on page 9, the Department of Education has recently reorganized its staff. Appendix A, page 107, presents the new core structure of MDE. Phase One of MDE's reorganization, which went into effect March 1, 2010, reduced the number of deputy superintendents from five to three, the number of associate state superintendents from six to four, and the number of bureau directors from thirty-four to twenty-eight. There were also six layoffs. The second phase of the reorganization could potentially eliminate more positions.

Phase One of MDE's reorganization reduced the number of major divisions from five to the following three:

- *Instructional Enhancement and Internal Operations*: includes the offices of accounting, curriculum and instruction, federal programs, healthy schools, procurement, special education, student assessment, vocational education, and reading, language and early childhood;
- *Educator Licensure and Special Schools*: responsible for assisting educators and prospective educators to obtain and maintain standard certification and licensure and to implement licensure guidelines set by the Certification Commission and State Board of Education; oversees four special schools located in Jackson, Brookhaven, and Columbus; and,
- *School Improvement, Oversight and Recovery*: assists low-performing schools with the development and implementation of their School Improvement Plans. These plans are intended to raise student achievement and improve school functioning so that the schools are no longer low-performing. To accomplish this, the division analyzes individual teacher effectiveness using observations, documented profile data, interviews, classroom assessment data, and staff input. The division is also responsible for providing classroom teachers with research-based methods to obtain and maintain quality effective classroom instruction.

As discussed on pages 29 through 31, MDE also has an Office of Educational Accountability, which is responsible for monitoring and reviewing programs developed under the Education Reform Act, the Mississippi Adequate Education Program Act of 1994, the Education Enhancement Fund, and subsequent education initiatives. The office provides information, recommendations and an annual assessment to the Legislature, Governor, Mississippi Commission on School Accreditation and the Board of Education.

Other administrative offices provide such support as human resources and budgeting.

As of July 2010, MDE had 783 authorized and 739 (94%) filled positions. (See Exhibit 12, page 56.) Most of MDE's offices are located in the Central High building in Jackson. Recently, staff of the offices of Healthy Schools and Reading, Early Childhood and Language Arts were relocated from the Robert E. Lee building to the Central High Building. Other staff are located on Greymont Street in Jackson, while the staff for deaf/blind schools are located at the schools.

As shown in Exhibit 12, 89% (658) of MDE's filled positions as of July 2010 were in the three major divisions of: Instructional Enhancement and Internal Operations; Educator Licensure and Special Schools; and School Improvement, Oversight and Recovery. (See Appendix A, page 107.)

MDE also has over 600 contractors to conduct such functions as test development, professional development of district staff, and school improvement visits. (See discussion of contractual expenditures on page 58.)

Need for Periodic Assessment of Staffing

Periodic assessments of organizational structure and staffing patterns would allow the board and the department to use the organizational structure and associated staff as a management tool to achieve long-term goals.

Although MDE modifies its long-range plan each year, MDE has not formally studied its current staffing distribution in relation to those plans. Both MDE and the board have a responsibility to ensure efficient use of personnel in accomplishing goals. The department's personnel work for a board that has set ambitious educational goals, two of which have a strong academic orientation (i. e., exit third grade reading on grade level by 2020; reach the national averages on national assessments by 2013). Improving academic instruction statewide is essential to accomplishing these goals and MDE has a responsibility to provide leadership in this area. Therefore, it is imperative

that MDE assess its staffing in relation to its long-range goals, particularly in the area of improved instruction.

Exhibit 12: Number of Authorized and Filled Positions by MDE Office as of July 2010*

	Number of Authorized Positions	Number of Filled Positions	% of Total Filled Positions
State Superintendent of Education	3	3	0.4%
Educational Accountability	65	61	8.2%
Human Resources	5	5	0.7%
Budget and Planning	5	5	0.7%
Special Assistant to the Superintendent	7	7	0.9%
Instructional Enhancement and Internal Operations	274	251	34%
Educator Licensure and Special Schools	262	247	33.4%
School Improvement, Oversight and Recovery	162	160	21.7%
TOTAL	783	739	

*Forty-eight positions/PINS are unfunded/undesignated and are not included in these counts. See Appendix A, page 107.

SOURCE: MDE Human Resources Office.

MDE's Staffing Allocation Does Not Follow its Strategic Priorities

The number of MDE staff devoted to assisting teachers and districts in improving regular academic instruction statewide is low compared to the number of staff devoted to specific groups of students (e. g., students enrolled in vocational courses) or to functions with low academic orientation (e. g., administrative support).

Although the staffing distribution noted above shows a significant allocation of staff resources overall to instructional enhancement and internal operations, educator licensure and special schools and school improvement, oversight and recovery, a closer look at program office staff (refer to Appendix A on page 107) shows that many staff members are assigned to special

programs that are not intended to improve regular academic instruction statewide.

Of the 739 filled MDE positions, 219 (30%) are assigned to special schools (e. g., School for the Arts). Also, a large number of staff members work in such special programs as healthy schools (56 positions), special education (49 positions), and vocational education (38 positions). An additional 135 positions are attendance officers who are dispersed throughout the state and are responsible for enforcing the Mississippi School Attendance Law. Also, 93 staff members (13% of total MDE filled positions) are considered by MDE to be support staff (i. e., performing administrative duties).

While staff are assigned to legitimate program areas that perform essential functions within the broader system of education, the number of MDE staff devoted to assisting teachers and districts in improving regular academic instruction statewide is low compared to the number of staff devoted to specific groups of students (e. g., special education, students enrolled in vocational courses) or to functions with low academic orientation (e. g., administrative support, school attendance officers). The office most directly responsible for contributing to improvement in instruction statewide is the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, which currently includes the Office of Reading, Early Childhood and Language Arts. These offices include eighteen staff members, four of which are support positions and six of which are funded through the federal Reading First program and are therefore only responsible for the performance of students in the twenty-two schools in the state that participate in Reading First (see page 46).[5] Thus the number of staff directly related to improving academic instruction statewide is quite small.

MDE's strategic plan is intended to promote educational improvement. Further, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) points out that states are not only required to comply with the mandates of NCLB, but they are also required to provide intensive and sustained support and improvement for local education agencies and schools. NASBE further notes that state agencies have historically been understaffed and have received little federal assistance to take on both compliance and support roles. The special education and healthy schools offices receive the majority of their funding via the federal government and are therefore required to perform the responsibilities mandated in order to receive that funding. Consequently, MDE has limited capabilities in reassigning some of its staff to different functional areas.

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[5] During the exit process in September 2010, MDE reported to PEER that the federal Reading First program had ended; thus, the number of staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction has since decreased to fifteen.

MDE has a responsibility to provide leadership in the area of improved classroom instructional strategies and organize its efforts around actions that support those strategies. Without this leadership, districts lack a shared focus as to what leads to improvement in teaching and learning.

Opportunity: Link Resource Allocation to the Strategic Plan

The Board of Education should align resource allocation (both financial and staffing) with its strategic plan. (See page 91.)

Opportunity: Periodically Assess Staffing Patterns

To help ensure efficient use of staff in accomplishing educational goals, MDE should periodically assess staffing patterns in relation to departmental workload and long-range plans for educational improvement, particularly in the area of improving instruction. (See page 91.)

Use of Contractual Employees

While the department prepares monthly and semi-annual reports for the board showing contractual services approved and executed, it does not provide information such that the board's members can see the total amount that was expended by contract purpose, whether amounts spent on contracts are appropriate given the long-term goals of the department, or whether the contracts achieve the desired results.

MDE procures a large amount of contractual services. In FY 2009, MDE's actual expenditures for contractual services totaled $33,065,480. Of this amount, the majority of the funding came from state general funds (55.8%) and federal funds (35.7%). The category with the highest amount of expenditures was Fees, Professional, and Other Services, totaling approximately $24.7 million, or nearly seventy-five percent of all of the department's expenditures for contractual services.

It is imperative that the board be aware of how these funds are used and whether they produce the desired results. As noted in the problem statement on page 3, the board believes it needs more targeted information on contractual services.

To determine the type of information presently available to the board regarding contractual expenditures, PEER reviewed the following materials from board meetings regarding contracts:

- monthly recommendations for approval or modification of contractual services, along with the name of the contractor, the MDE office for which the contractor provides services, scope of the

project, and scope of the contract (including contract length, amount of contract, and funding source);

- two separate monthly reports of contracts approved and contracts executed in the previous month, organized alphabetically by contractor name. Each report included the contract number, contractor name, contract start and end dates, amount of general, federal, and other funds, and a brief service description (e. g., trainer, consultant);
- monthly recommendation for approval of contracts with former state employees receiving retirement benefits for an amount exceeding $20,000 per year, as required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-104-17 (4) (1972). The report listed the retiree's name, the contract end date, the gross and net contract amounts, the MDE office, and a brief service description (e. g., team member/program monitoring, technical assistance); and,
- semi-annual report of contracts organized alphabetically by contractor name. Each report included the contract number, contractor name, contract start and end dates, amount of general, federal, and other funds, and a brief service description (e. g., trainer, consultant).

PEER determined, based on its review of the above information that is routinely provided to the board:

- *It is difficult to tell for what purposes contract funds are being spent over an extended period.* The information included in the semi-annual reports was voluminous (e. g., a list of thirty-two pages for the contracts approved July 1, 2009, through December 31, 2009) and was not summarized. It was organized alphabetically instead of being organized by function or by board priority.

  Because the department procures such a large amount of contractual services, the way that this information is presented is not particularly useful for the board or the department. It would be extremely difficult for a board member or any third party to decipher from this report for what purpose the funds are being expended. Without categorized or summarized information, the board is uninformed as to what efforts contract expenditures support and where potential over-spending or under-spending could be occurring.
- *It is difficult to tell whether the amounts spent on contracts are appropriate, given the long-term goals of the department.* One of the seven principles of performance management (refer to discussion on page 28) is the allocation of resources (financial

and staffing) according to priorities and desired results. As discussed on pages 58 through 59, from the contract information that is routinely presented to the board, it is unclear to what extent and how financial and staffing resources (including contractual services) are applied in relation to the board's priorities. Consequently, the board cannot be assured that its contractual resources are appropriate to accomplish its long-term goals.

- *The expected results of contractual services are not clear.* The department does not clearly spell out the desired end result of each contract in its recommendation for approval of contracts to the board. The recommendation includes the scope of the project, which is typically a description of the work to be performed instead of a description of the results to be produced.

  The U. S. Government Accountability Office notes that shifting the contractual focus from the process or tasks to the overall results has the potential to encourage obtaining more positive outcomes. Also, the performance measures that define the work in measurable terms are missing from information routinely provided to the board, along with a plan for evaluating the contractor's work in producing the desired results.

Thus the board's ability to make informed decisions regarding the approval or modification of new contracts or the renewal of contracts is compromised by the way that the contractual expenditure information is presented and the type of information that is not included.

Opportunity: Improve Reporting of Expenditures for Contract Staff

The department should compile for the board an annual summary of categorized contractual service expenditures that includes the number of contracts, contract purposes, expenditure amounts, and results of the contracts. *(See page 91.)*

Opportunity: Apply Principles of Performance-Based Contracting

To enhance accountability for contract staff by focusing on end results, the board should familiarize itself with the elements of performance-based contracting and apply those principles when reviewing contract expenditure information presented by MDE staff. *(See page 92.)*

Measurement and Reporting

MDE's current departmental performance measures are not appropriate to establish accountability because they focus solely on measuring the activities performed rather than measuring the results achieved. Performance measures should ultimately reflect accountability of a person, group, or organization for the results of an activity and should provide managers with information on how resources and efforts should be allocated to increase effectiveness.

Good measurement and reporting are necessary for successful performance management. One of the key elements of a successful performance management system is a measurement process that supports the performance management system. This includes a focus on results as opposed to processes.

Performance measures ultimately reflect accountability of a certain person, group, or organization for the results of an activity. Such accountability mechanisms are another key element of a successful performance management system. (See discussion on page 28.)

The National Performance Advisory Management Commission notes that there is no value in collecting hundreds of performance measures that are never used. What is more important is collecting the right measures. Performance measures provide the information that policy makers need to make informed decisions regarding planning, budgeting, management, and evaluation of programs and activities. The reporting of the data is critical, as it must be presented in a way that is understandable and useful to make decisions.

Elements of Performance Measurement

Performance measurement provides managers with information on how resources and efforts should be allocated to increase effectiveness, as well as justifying resources by providing indicators to show how stakeholders benefit.

According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Council for Excellence in Government, performance measurement includes an acknowledgement of what a program intends to accomplish and whether results are being achieved. This effort provides managers with information on how resource and efforts should be allocated to increase effectiveness. It also supports justification of resources by providing indicators to show how stakeholders benefit.

In addition to information provided by performance measurement, policymakers often need evaluation data in order to understand why results occur and the value of

any given program. This information helps with effective decision-making. While the measures themselves might not provide definitive answers, they do raise fundamental questions.

The OMB and Council for Excellence in Government offer some key concepts involved in performance measurement:

- *performance goals*: the levels of performance are expressed as measurable objectives against which actual achievement can be compared. Performance goals can be stated as outcomes or outputs, but to be complete they should incorporate targets and timeframes for completion.
    - *performance measures*-the indicators used to gauge program performance (e. g., outcome, output)
    - *targets*-the measurable characteristic that tells how well a program must accomplish a performance measure;
- *inputs:* resources used to produce outputs and outcomes (e. g., funding, staffing);
- *outputs:* the goods and services produced by a program or organization (e. g., the number of assessments administered); and,
- *outcomes:* describe the intended result or consequence that will occur from carrying out a program or activity (e. g., percentage of graduating students who were placed in military, post-secondary education, or employment).

The OMB and the Council for Excellence in Government acknowledge that common performance measurement problems are situations in which the program's outcomes are extremely difficult to measure or when the program is one of many contributors to the desired outcome.

The Department's Use of Output Measures Rather than Outcome Measures

MDE's departmental performance measures are not appropriate to establish accountability because they focus solely on measuring the activities performed rather than measuring the results achieved.

Entities are much more likely to use outputs rather than outcomes as performance measures because output data is collected and reported more frequently. Also, outputs typically correspond to activities and functions being directly controlled as opposed to the results produced.

Simple outputs are not particularly meaningful to policy makers because they are not linked to results produced. However, outcomes are typically affected by outside

factors over which the agency has little or no control. Such is often the case in education, where the long-term outcomes include student achievement and success after high school in post-secondary education or in the workforce. (See discussion on page 42.)

Following are two examples of MDE's use of output measures rather than outcome measures.

Use of Output Measures: The Mississippi Teacher Center

An example of MDE's use of output measures rather than outcome measures is the Mississippi Teacher Center (MSTC). The MSTC established its annual performance measure as the target number of teachers recruited in shortage areas in Mississippi, which are included within the MDE budget request and through the appropriations bill for MDE.

The MSTC fulfills all program specific statutory reporting requirements in regard to the programs provided through the center. The MSTC tracks and reports the output measures of number of participants, number of awards, and number of participants employed for each of its programs. In addition, the MSTC reports on the number of awards and the amount of funds expended for each of the teacher incentive programs that allows for a cost per participant measure to be used for an initial efficiency measure.

However, the department does not track or provide any information on long-term outcome measures on how the various MSTC teacher recruitment incentive programs impact teacher retention and enhancement. There is also currently no analysis process in place that allows for the MSTC to combine the long-term retention rate of program participants with the initial cost of recruiting the participants. Therefore, no outcome measure in the form of cost of recruitment per year of service is in place to track the long-term efficiency of the incentive programs.

Use of Output Measures: Conservatorship and School Improvement

Another example of MDE's use of output measures is in the area of conservatorship and school improvement. PEER found that the only measure of the department's effectiveness is the number of schools that move off the "schools-at-risk" list. The "schools-at-risk" list is comprised of those schools in the Failing category in any given year and those schools in the Low-Performing category and/or the At-Risk-of-Failing category for two consecutive years. For the current year, the first in which

labels were assigned under the new accountability system, only the schools in the Failing category were included.

One problem with this measure is that it does not take into account those schools that move off the list for one year only to return to the list the following year--the so called "yo-yo effect." This measure does not provide a valid measure of long-term effectiveness of conservatorship and school improvement.

Because so many outside influences affect educational outcomes, it would be unrealistic to try to determine MDE's effectiveness using measures such as test scores, graduation rates, or post-secondary enrollment. Although these are measures of the educational system as a whole in Mississippi, the board should not use them to hold MDE accountable for its use of resources.

While MDE's goals refer to measures such as dropout rates and test scores, it is unrealistic to use student outcomes to determine MDE's effectiveness. For example, student achievement is affected by multiple outside factors (e. g., teacher's effectiveness, student's motivation to learn). Therefore, MDE cannot be held solely accountable for student achievement.

The challenge is to determine to what extent MDE is responsible for achievement. Logic models focus on the work an agency does and how that work connects to outcomes. PEER determined that using a logic model might be the most effective way for MDE to demonstrate how its work connects to outcomes such as student achievement.

Opportunity: Improve the Quality of Performance Measures

The department should improve the identification and use of its performance measures. PEER determined the following strategies for improving the identification and use of performance measures: (1) shift from output measures to more meaningful outcome measures (see page 93); (2) develop interim outcome measures through logic models (see page 94); and, (3) report both inputs and outputs when outcomes are not feasible so that, at a minimum, the board knows what resources are dedicated to areas in which results cannot be measured (see page 97).

Although the Department of Education collects and reports a significant amount of data, the department is not using this data to its fullest extent.

Responsibilities of the Office of Research and Statistics

Currently, MDE's Office of Research and Statistics does not collect data; it works with data supplied by other MDE offices. The office is not responsible for ensuring the accuracy or the validity of the data used in accountability or reporting.

According to its director, the Office of Research and Statistics is responsible for working with other offices of MDE to develop, implement, and run accurate, valid, and equitable accountability systems that support the policies of the Board of Education. Toward these ends, the Office of Research and Statistics provides services in six main areas:

- development and implementation of the state-level Achievement and Growth model, the federal-level Adequate Yearly Progress model, and the federal-level Title III Accountability model;
- maintenance of the Mississippi Assessment and Accountability Reporting System;
- reporting state- and federal-level data and providing data to the offices of MDE to report state- and federal-level data;
- providing data to contracted assessment vendors and analyzing data from contracted assessment vendors;
- providing technical support to the offices of MDE; and,
- responding to ad-hoc requests for data as needed.

The Office of Research and Statistics is not a data collection office; the office works with data supplied by the other offices of MDE. Further, the office is not responsible for ensuring the accuracy or the validity of the data used in accountability or reporting; the offices from which the data originate are responsible for ensuring the accuracy and the validity of the data. The Office of Research and Statistics is responsible for ensuring that the accountability models/programs are run correctly and that they provide accurate results based on the data provided. The office presents its reports in federally or state-mandated formats, which makes it more difficult for the Board of Education to determine answers to questions that would guide board policy. (See Appendix F, page 130, for a

list of these reports, the legislation that requires them, and a brief description of their contents.)

The Need for Linked Longitudinal Data Systems and a Research Agenda for Mississippi's Education System

The implementation and use of linked longitudinal data systems that follow an individual's performance from primary education through entry into the workforce, along with a solid research agenda, are essential to improving both student and educational system performance.

Data are essential for improving student performance. States that perform research on a linked *longitudinal data system* that follows an individual's performance from primary education through entry into the workforce can answer questions that are at the core of educational effectiveness. Such questions include:

- which teachers and schools produce strong academic growth for their students;
- how teachers and schools achieve academic growth for their students;
- what performance level in middle school indicates that a student is on track to succeed in high school;
- what indicators (enrollment in certain courses, performance on certain tests) are the best predictors of success in college or in the workforce; or,
- what percentage of high school graduates take remedial courses in college.

Research provides a way to monitor the effectiveness of various initiatives through meaningful performance measures and provide data useful for policy making purposes. Research on a linked longitudinal data system makes it possible to: (1) follow a student's academic progress as the student moves from grade to grade; (2) determine the effectiveness of specific programs and specific schools; (3) evaluate the effect of teacher training programs on student performance; and (4) identify high-performing schools (not just in terms of a student's test scores, but also in terms of the value added to a student's performances) so that educators can learn from best practices.

Stakeholders need information from research on a linked longitudinal data system to improve student performance and system performance. Access to such information would give teachers the information they need to tailor instruction to individual students, would give administrators the information they need to manage schools efficiently and effectively, and would enable policymakers to determine which initiatives show the best evidence of improving student performance.

Because Mississippi's existing education data systems (i. e., K-12, post-secondary, workforce) were originally designed to meet annual reporting requirements, not to track progress over time, these systems have not been linked. Thus presently it is difficult, if not impossible, for the board or the department to examine student progress and outcomes over time and to determine whether students are prepared for college and for the workforce.

The existing longitudinal data systems for Mississippi's primary education system, secondary education system, postsecondary education system, and workforce system have not been linked because these systems were designed independently to meet annual report requirements, not to track progress over time.

Currently, there is not a unique student identifier, other than the Social Security number, that could be used to match data for a student in one data system with data for the same student in another data system. Although each data system may have its own unique identifier, these identifiers are not common across the various data systems.

According to personnel at MDE, the primary reason that the department has not linked its data system to the other data systems throughout the state is insufficient funding for this purpose. According to personnel at MDE, the primary reason MDE has not implemented a research agenda or collaborated with universities, researchers, or intermediary groups is that the responsibility of the Office of Research and Statistics is to ensure that the state and federal accountability models (which measure student performance) are run correctly and to provide accurate results based on the data provided for those models. As previously stated, the Office of Research and Statistics functions neither as a data collection office nor as a research office; rather, it compiles information for reports for other offices within MDE.

The Office of Research and Statistics has preliminary plans for a research agenda known as the Statewide System of Support. However, this agenda has not yet been implemented. Further, this agenda focuses solely on MDE's data system and is not concerned with postsecondary outcomes or with workforce outcomes. It focuses solely on negative outcomes--that is, identifying indicators that signify a program, a school, or a district as at risk of failing. A more proactive research agenda would include identifying indicators that signify a program, a school, or a district as exceeding expectations. This information could then be used to implement those practices or programs throughout the state.

Because the state does not have a linked longitudinal data system and has not implemented a research agenda, the

board and other stakeholders are not able to determine whether districts, schools, and students are meeting the state's postsecondary and workforce readiness expectations. Further, the board is not able to make policy decisions based on data, including determining whether a program or an initiative should be continued or discontinued (because the data to evaluate that program or initiative is not available).

Opportunity: Utilize Grant Funding for Development of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System

In June 2009 and May 2010, the U. S. Department of Education awarded Mississippi grants--one for $3.4 million and one for $7.6 million--to design and implement a statewide longitudinal data system. By the end of the second grant period in 2013, MDE expects to have a relational database linking all education (K-20) and workforce data. *(See page 98.)*

The Need for Multi-Year Outcome Data to Demonstrate Program Effectiveness

MDE does not collect and analyze multi-year data on outcome measures in order to demonstrate effectiveness or ineffectiveness of programs such as vocational education.

As noted previously, outcome measures may be helpful in determining what efforts are effective and what efforts are ineffective. Such measures should be included in the research agenda associated with the longitudinal database described in the previous section.

One example of the need for this type of research is MDE's vocational education program. The federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, which provides funding to Mississippi (approximately $14 million in FY 2009) as well as to other states, aims to increase the quality of vocational, career, and technical education throughout the country.

MDE's Office of Vocational Education has been collecting career and technical education performance data required by the federal government since the 2007-08 school year. Since the 2007-08 school year, the office has had to report annually on the Perkins IV core indicators. (See Appendix G, page 131, for the performance indicators required by the Perkins IV.) These measures are intended to gauge Career Technical Education effectiveness; however, the data is extremely difficult to generate because a student is not tracked with a single identifier throughout his/her education/career. Therefore, MDE does not definitively know the extent to which Career Technical Education prepares students for years after high school (e. g., college, career), nor can MDE identify with certainty the programs or initiatives that are most effective. The department does

not have a definitive basis for determining whether it is making the best use of its vocational funds derived from the Perkins Act.

MDE's lack of a linked longitudinal data system limits the Office of Vocational Education's ability to measure the effectiveness of CTE.

Opportunity: Use Research on Outcome Measures to Demonstrate Overall Effectiveness of Programs

The federal government has established meaningful outcome measures that MDE could use as models for indicators of overall program or system effectiveness. *(See page 100.)*

Opportunity: Produce Multi-Year Trend Reports

To provide for better analyses of student performance data, MDE should produce multi-year trend reports for districts. MDE could connect staff from the Office of Research and Statistics to district staff in order to increase the level of analysis and interpretation of student performance data. *(See page 100.)*

Presentation of Data to the Board

Because the Board of Education does not have a visual instrument that synthesizes the data collected by MDE and that presents the information contained in this data in a form that is accessible to non-data experts, the board is not able to evaluate fully the effectiveness of the programs and the offices at MDE. Further, the board is not able to determine the status of progress toward the educational goals that the board has set for MDE.

Presenting data in meaningful forms for ease of analysis by decisionmakers is critical. The board needs to view a variety of indicators measuring student performance and system performance and have these indicators presented in forms that can guide it in carrying out its oversight role. As MDE collects increasing amounts of data intended to measure student performance and school improvement, the need arises to find ways to manage and integrate the data into the board's decision-making.

MDE staff present data to the Board of Education at each month's board meeting. However, the data are often presented without other data that are essential for understanding meaning and context, such as receiving notification of whether schools meet adequate yearly progress in reaching required proficiency levels without also having group-specific or grade-specific data that determines adequate yearly progress. That is, the data at MDE are interconnected and presenting only some of the interconnected data and not tying the interconnected data

to a related goal of the board prevents the board from determining whether education in general and MDE in particular are headed in the right direction.

Also, MDE staff often present data in a manner that is difficult for those who are not intimately familiar with the program or office to understand, such as presenting the board with growth residuals. Although growth residuals are the actual representation of student growth within schools, the concept is difficult to understand and requires extensive visualization for a layperson to understand. Although the Board of Education guides educational policy within the state, the members of the board are not necessarily data experts. The board needs MDE staff to synthesize the data and to present it in a form that would allow it to assess quickly the status of a program or office.

To date, MDE has not implemented a visual instrument that would enable the board to understand the status of the goals that the board has set for MDE. The lack of such an instrument inhibits the board's ability to make informed policy decisions about programs or initiatives.

MDE staff has performed preliminary work on developing a data dashboard concept—i. e., a visual instrument that contains key indicators of performance. In fact, the data and the software are in place for such an instrument. However, the person assigned to implement the instrument was reassigned as a result of the restructuring of MDE.

Opportunity: Use a "Data Dashboard"

The department's implementation of a visual instrument that contains key indicators of performance (i. e., a "data dashboard") would enable the board to see, at a glance, whether current efforts toward meeting its goals are on track and to respond quickly and appropriately when problems arise. *(See page 101.)*

Changes in Educational Standards and Programs

The effectiveness of MDE's programs and activities is difficult to gauge over time when educational standards and ways of thinking are in an almost constant state of change and when funds for specific programs are eliminated or reduced before effectiveness can be demonstrated.

The Board of Education is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of MDE's programs. However, as previously stated, several factors, many typically beyond the board's control, create challenges in measuring the effectiveness of those programs.

Change is part of the environment in which education operates and is often necessary to increase student achievement. The state has experienced significant changes in recent years regarding its educational standards, assessments, and accountability model. Also, elimination of programs due to elimination of funding has affected the activities of MDE and districts and has affected the ability of entities to monitor program effectiveness over time.

The changes in standards and programs discussed in this chapter are:

- changes in curriculum and assessments;
- changes in the state accountability model;
- discontinued funding for High School Redesign;
- discontinued funding for Mississippi's Reading Reform Model; and,
- reduced funding for Children's Progress Academic Assessment.

PEER does not believe that all of the changes described in this chapter are necessarily negative. In fact, some of the changes appear to move MDE in a positive direction in accomplishing its mission. The goal for the board and MDE should be to monitor the changes and measure progress over time to demonstrate the effectiveness of those changes.

Changes in Curriculum and Assessments

Increased Rigor of Standards

In 2006-07, MDE increased the rigor of curriculum and assessment standards in response to poor performance on the national assessment and on the ACT.

In 2008, Mississippi's ACT average composite score was 18.9, the lowest score of all fifty states. Scores were also

at the bottom on the NAEP. In response, Mississippi has revised its academic content standards, assessment standards, and achievement standards in recent years to reflect more rigor.

- *Academic content standards* are the curriculum frameworks; these standards dictate what knowledge and skills are needed for a particular grade or course. Students are now required to have a greater depth of knowledge of subject matter. For example, the old content standards stated that fifth graders should identify, describe, compare, and classify geometric figures. To master this skill, students would identify, describe, and compare shapes, as well as know what characteristics are used to group them in classifications. In the revised math curriculum framework, students must take that knowledge further by justifying why a shape is a rectangle or triangle by understanding the properties of the figures and how the figured can be described using coordinate geometry. MDE implemented new academic content standards in 2006-07 in English/Language Arts and in math.
- *Assessment standards* are the measurement of students' knowledge of subject matter. Increasing the rigor of assessment standards has meant including test items on assessments that correspond to the appropriate depth of knowledge for that particular academic objective. MDE implemented new assessment standards in 2008 in English/Language Arts and math.
- *Achievement standards* are the cutoff scores on assessments used to indicate at what level students have mastered the academic content. MDE uses a process called *item descriptor matching* to set its cutoff scores; research supports the defensibility of this method. MDE implemented these new standards for cutoff scores in the summer of 2008.

As stated on page 15, there are four levels of performance on each assessment: minimal, basic, proficient, and advanced. According to MDE, students at the proficient level are able to perform at the level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency specified by the grade-level content standards. Students at the basic level are able to perform some of the content standards at a low level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency as specified by the grade-level content standards, while advanced level students perform at a high level. Thus, it is preferable, although unlikely, that all students perform at least at the proficient level.

As a result of the recent changes in curriculum, assessments, and in the way that cut scores for assessments are set, the number of students classified as

proficient has changed, as well as the number of students in other classifications (minimal, basic, and advanced).

The changes to academic content, assessment, and achievement standards are reflected in a comparison of Mississippi Curriculum Test scores from the 2006-2007 school year to the 2007-2008 school year. For example, as shown in Exhibit 13, below, the percentage of fourth grade students scoring advanced and proficient in math was over 81 percent in 2006-2007 but only slightly over 55 percent in 2007-2008. Because of the difference in the academic content standards, test standards, and achievement standards in the two school years, the data is not truly comparable.

Exhibit 13: Comparison of Mississippi Curriculum Test Scores in Fourth Grade Math for the 2006-07 and 2007-08 School Years

School Year	% Minimal	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced
2006-07	6.3%	12.5%	41.7%	39.6%
2007-08	18.4%	26.4%	46.5%	8.7%

SOURCE: PEER analysis of MCT scores reported in the Mississippi Assessment and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS).

Adoption of a National Common Core

In June 2010, the board adopted a "national common core" curriculum that will require Mississippi to revise its curriculum again. State assessments are likely to change also.

Adding to the problem of comparing performance data because of changes in the state's curriculum and assessments, according to corestandards.org (i. e., the official website for the common core curriculum produced by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers), governors and state commissioners of education from forty-eight states have committed to developing a common core of state standards in English/language arts and mathematics. This initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

The draft standards were released on March 10, 2010. The common core will cause Mississippi to again revise its curriculum, particularly in the area of math. A comparison by MDE staff found that the common core standards in math introduced many concepts at earlier grades than the

state standards. The board adopted the common core at its June 2010 board meeting.

One reason that the national common core curriculum was developed is that in the past it has been difficult for students to transfer from a school in one state to a school in another state when those states have various standards for curriculum and assessments. For example, if a state is teaching its students certain concepts at an earlier grade than the state in which the student previously attended school, the student will likely not be prepared for the class because concepts usually build from one grade or class to another. The Common Core Standards Initiative attempts to help with this problem. Also, if common assessments are developed, Mississippi will have access to quality assessments while benefiting from economies of scale, splitting the costs associated with testing with other states.

However, the national common core, as well as potentially national common assessments, creates a problem when attempting to gauge progress in student performance over time by imposing a new set of standards because the baselines and benchmarks must be reset. Trends must start over and comparisons are virtually impossible.

Changes in the State Accountability Model

Frequent Changes in Response to Statutory Requirements and Curriculum Changes

In 2007, state law mandated inclusion of graduation and dropout rates in the state accountability model. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, MDE changed its state accountability model for the fourth time since 1988 in response to the more rigorous curriculum and assessment system implemented in 2007-08.

The current accountability system is the fourth comprehensive accountability model to be used in Mississippi since 1988. The most current accountability model has only yielded results for one year (2009). MDE sought a need to change the accountability model for the following reasons:

- In 2007, the Legislature passed S. B. 2960, which required the inclusion of graduation and dropout rates in the state accountability model.
- During the 2007-2008 school year, new tests that were more closely aligned with Mississippi's new mathematics and language arts curriculum were administered for the first time. According to MDE, because the tests were more rigorous, the previous model was not appropriate for use with the tests.

The State Superintendent of Education appointed an Accountability Task Force to develop recommendations for revising the state accountability system. The Commission on School Accreditation reviewed the task force's recommendations and recommended a new accountability system to the Board of Education. The Board of Education approved the revised accountability system at its March 2009 meeting, with the first ratings assigned based on the revised system made in fall 2009. While the previous model did not consider graduation and dropout rates, the new model considers both.

Exhibit 14, below, shows the differences in how districts and schools are categorized according to the current model (2009 results) and the previous model (2007 results). (As mentioned previously, the board did not assign classifications in 2008.) The number of top-performing schools has decreased with the current accountability model, which suggests that MDE is holding districts to a higher standard than in the past.

Exhibit 14: Number of Districts and Schools by Performance Classification Using the Current Accountability Model (2009 Results) and the Previous Accountability Model (2007 Results)

Current Accountability Model (2009 Results):

Performance Classification	Number of Districts	Number of Schools
Star	2	34
High performing	21	142
Successful	38	217
Academic Watch	37	189
Low Performing	0	6
At Risk of Failure	45	158
Failing	8	53
TOTAL	151	799

Previous Accountability Model (2007 Results):

Performance Classification	Number of Districts		Performance Classification	Number of Schools
Accredited	145		Superior Performing	207
Advised	4		Exemplary	215
Probation	3		Successful	313
			Underperforming	96
			Low Performing	11
			Not Assigned	47
TOTAL	152			889

NOTE: The one less district in 2009 is Hinds County Agricultural High School. Because it does not offer Algebra I or Biology I in 9th grade, MDE was not able to calculate growth for that district and did not provide that district with a performance classification. The same issue applies to the difference in numbers of schools. Also, some schools have closed and K-2 schools are no longer included since the state no longer assesses students in grade 2, as it had previously.

SOURCE: Mississippi Assessment and Accountability Reporting System (MAARS).

Changes in Response to New Method for Calculating and Reporting Graduation and Dropout Rates

In 2005, all fifty states agreed to begin implementing a standard method for calculating graduation and dropout rates (i. e., a cohort rate). As of 2010, MDE will only use a cohort rate for reporting.

Graduation and dropout rates are fundamental indicators of whether a state's K-12 education system is doing what it is intended to do to "allow [students] to be successful in college and the workforce and flourish as parents and citizens."[6]

Several sections of the MISSISSIPPI CODE require calculation and reporting of cohort dropout and/or graduation rates (see § 37-3-53, § 37-21-9, § 37-13-80, and § 37-13-85). MDE had previously used simple student counts to calculate graduation and dropout rates. The rates were calculated using annual counts for all students, not data for individual students over time. The number of diploma recipients for the school year was divided by an adjusted ninth grade enrollment count (i. e., number of

[6] The Vision Statement is quoted from MDE's *Five-Year Strategic Plan for FY 2011 through FY 2015*, published on the department's website.

ninth graders four years earlier adjusted for student transfers or deaths).

In 2005, the National Governors Association convened a Task Force on State High School Graduation Data to make recommendations about how states could develop a high-quality, comparable high school graduation measure. They found that the quality of state high school graduation and dropout data is such that most states cannot fully account for their students as they progress through high school. Mississippi's governor, along with governors from every other state, as well as twelve national organizations, signed an agreement to take steps to implement a standard, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. States agreed to calculate the graduation rate by dividing the number of on-time graduates in a given year by the number of first-time entering ninth graders four years earlier. Graduates are those receiving a high school diploma. The denominator can be adjusted for transfers in and out of the system and data systems will ideally track individual students with a longitudinal student unit record data system.

In 2006, MDE began calculating a cohort rate (in addition to the traditional rate) that tracks individual students over time using data in the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS). The four-year cohort rate is an estimated graduation rate for a full cohort of students beginning with entering ninth grade students four years earlier. The first four-year cohort rate was published in November 2006 and included 2001/2002 entering ninth grade students. As of 2010, MDE will no longer use the traditional rate; only the cohort rate will be used for reporting.

Cohort graduation and dropout rates calculated by tracking individual students are more accurate than rates based on annual counts of all students and the rates can be disaggregated by student demographic characteristics. While the new calculations for graduation and dropout rates represent improvement, comparisons of these rates between years is virtually impossible. Further, when comparisons are unavailable, accountability is affected. Baselines and trends must be reset; therefore, a number of years must pass in order to tell to what extent the numbers are increasing or decreasing.

Discontinued Funding for High School Redesign

In 2006, the previous Superintendent of Education announced a shift in education and termed it Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce. This focus on integrating academic and technical content in education was intended to prepare students for the workplace more effectively, lower the dropout rate, and make college an option for all

Mississippi students. However, after funding a total of thirty-two school district pilot sites for implementation of the program, the Legislature did not fund High School Redesign for the 2009-10 school year. The effects on schools that have not received funding are unknown due to the lack of research on the effectiveness of the program.

In 2006, Dr. Hank Bounds, the previous State Superintendent of Education, announced an overhaul of how Mississippi provides education at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The purpose of Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce (or "High School Redesign") in Mississippi was to implement workforce education starting in kindergarten and encourage students to select a career pathway in the tenth grade. (See Appendix H, page 132, for the goals of the High School Redesign Program.) MDE claimed that High School Redesign would "dramatically change the face of education in Mississippi" and that it was extremely important to continue funding until the program reached full implementation in all middle and high schools.

Under High School Redesign, students could select classes based on specific pathways to prepare them for a career or college and meet the employment needs of businesses in Mississippi (i. e., a focus on college and career readiness). High School Redesign also aimed at helping MDE meet its larger goals of cutting the dropout rate to 13 percent and reaching the national average on national assessments by 2013.

The department awarded funds for High School Redesign as competitive grants, with thirteen pilot sites selected in the 2007-08 school year and nineteen more high schools selected in the 2008-09 school year. However, High School Redesign was not funded for the 2009-10 school year; therefore, there are some schools that have implemented a new curriculum for Career Technical Education, while others are still on the old curriculum. The challenge for MDE is to determine how to "equalize the playing field" since funding stopped.

Also, since the 2007-08 school year, the office has to report annually on the Perkins IV core indicators, which are intended to gauge Career Technical Education effectiveness. As discussed on pages 68 through 69, MDE does not have the data needed to gauge Career Technical Education effectiveness adequately.

Similar to the effects of the changing curriculum in general education, as discussed on page 71, changing the Career Technical Education curriculum creates a problem when gauging progress in student performance over time by imposing a new set of standards. The baselines and benchmarks must be reset. Trends must start over, and comparisons are virtually impossible. Further, it is unknown how MDE plans to incorporate High School Redesign into the common core (see page 73 for

discussion). Such efforts could create problems in monitoring the effectiveness of career and technical education.

Discontinued Funding for the Reading Reform Model

Mississippi has abandoned parts of the Mississippi Reading Reform Model because most of its funding came from sources that are no longer available. Currently, Mississippi has no statewide literacy plan.

In 1997, the State Board of Education established "Mississippi Reading Initiative. . .Every Child a Reader." To support this initiative, the Mississippi Legislature passed Senate Bill 2944 during the 1998 session to create a Reading Sufficiency Program. This law requires every school district in Mississippi to establish and implement a program for reading reform.

The development of the reading reform model included a review of national research. Appendix I, page 133, lists the four basic components of the Mississippi Reading Reform Model. Funding sources were to include Reading Sufficiency Funds (state), the Reading Excellence Act Grant (federal), the Barksdale Reading Institute (private sector), and Reading First (federal). Of these sources, MDE currently only receives funds from the federal Reading First program. These funds target a small number of schools and are therefore not appropriate for a statewide literacy initiative.

The current superintendent stated there are plans for a statewide literacy initiative that would be a professional development model. However, this model has not yet been developed.

Reduced Funding for the Children's Progress Academic Assessment

In 2007, the Legislature passed a law requiring MDE to implement early literacy and numeracy screening assessment instruments. MDE selected a contractor to administer the assessments, but this contract will be eliminated in the 2010-11 school year due to budget cuts. The level of effectiveness of this program will not have been established due to the short period in which to monitor program results.

During the 2007 session, the Mississippi Legislature passed House Bill 1058 (now CODE Section 37-23-16), which requires the Department of Education to implement early literacy and numeracy screening assessment instruments. Section 37-23-16 defines *literacy* as the ability to read and write and *numeracy* as fluency in understanding numbers and mathematical operations. The goal of the program is to improve student literacy and mathematics achievement by proactively monitoring

progress in the early grades and responding with timely actions at the school, district, and state levels.

Requirements under the law include the following:

- MDE is to establish a reporting system for school districts to monitor the effectiveness of the literacy or numeracy screening assessment instruments and require school districts to submit data annually that may be utilized to determine whether the instruments are accurately identifying students in need.
- MDE is to prepare an annual report on the effectiveness of the literacy and numeracy screening assessment instruments and the overall effectiveness of the testing.

The Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) was created specifically for K-third grades and consists of a computer-based assessment that adapts to each child's strengths and weaknesses, immediate reports for educators, and recommended activities for instruction and intervention. It is a universal screener for dyslexia.

Eighty-seven school districts implemented the assessment in their elementary schools for the 2009-10 school year. All elementary schools were expected to use the instrument during the 2010-11 school year; however, state funding for the CPAA will not continue through FY 2011 because of MDE's budget cuts.

MDE's annual report on the CPAA's effectiveness provides scores and performance levels for all concepts. MDE needs more years of data to realize its goal of projecting whether students are on track to being proficient in language arts and math at the end of third grade. The main problem is that this program will not have been funded long enough to provide such data.

Implications of Changing Standards and Programs

A major implication of the changes in standards and programs is that this significantly complicates the process of measuring and managing progress toward critical educational goals.

While change is part of the environment in which education operates and is often necessary to promote increases in student achievement, a major implication of changes in standards and programs is that this significantly complicates the process of measuring and managing progress toward critical educational goals. Ultimately, change itself creates a measurement problem that may be detrimental to overall performance improvement efforts if the proper measurement tools (e.g., longitudinal databases, use of multiple indicators,

comparative analysis of tests) are not in place to help determine the actual impact of change. Therefore, it is imperative that educational policy-makers recognize and, where possible, mitigate the measurement problems inherent in constantly changing standards and programs.

Opportunity: Measure and Manage Change

In order to mitigate the challenges of changing standards and programs, both the Board of Education and the Department of Education could benefit from focusing additional effort on developing performance management capacity supported by a full complement of sound measurement tools (i. e., longitudinal data systems, creative use of multiple indicators, a data dashboard). *(See page 101.)*

Part III

Overview of Part III

How could the accountability of the Department of Education be improved?

PEER provides a list of twenty opportunities for improving the accountability of the Department of Education. These opportunities and details on their implementation are listed on pages 85 through 104 of this report.

Opportunities: Federal and State Mandates

Define Mandates

1. **The Board of Education, working through MDE, should operationally define as many mandates as possible.**

   An example of an operationally defined mandate would be determining what scores on what tests will be used to determine the extent to which the school age population is functionally literate.

Advocate for Unified Reporting Mandates Based on Meaningful Outcome Measures

2. **After developing logic models for its major activities (as discussed on page 94), the Board of Education, working through MDE, should present the Legislature with suggestions for improving statewide reporting mandates.**

   These suggestions should include ways to reduce redundant reporting requirements and ways to eliminate inadequate performance measures. The Legislature should then amend state law to reflect the measurement and reporting of those meaningful outcome measures.

Opportunities: Accountability Tools

The Office of Educational Accountability

Refocus the Office of Educational Accountability

3. **The recent reorganization of the Office of Educational Accountability would allow for a shift from financial accountability to increased accountability of MDE programs and resources. The office could then play a critical role in helping the board fulfill its role to hold MDE accountable for programs and resources.**

As noted previously in this report, MDE has recently undergone a reorganization implemented by the State Superintendent of Education. Under this reorganization, a new Office of Program Evaluation has been created in order to be in compliance with the assessment requirements of MISS. CODE ANN. §37-151-9 (1972).

A staff member from the Office of Internal Accountability moved to the Office of Program Evaluation and that person is currently the only staff member in the Office of Program Evaluation. According to the Director of the Office of Educational Accountability, this office will have the following responsibilities:

- to conduct periodic evaluations and assessments of federal and state programs administered by the Mississippi Department of Education to ensure compliance with applicable regulations, laws and State Board of Education policies and to determine if goals and objectives are being attained;
- to prepare reports containing assessment results and recommendations, of both positive and negative aspects, and submit reports to the State Legislature, the State Board of Education, and/or other state agencies and organizations for appropriate action; and,
- to assist MDE departmental staff in interpreting and applying program guidelines.

The Director also noted that the ultimate objective of this newly formed office is to improve MDE program administration and achievement.

By shifting MDE resources to the Office of Educational Accountability for the purpose of performing more program assessments, the office could play a critical role in helping the board fulfill its role to hold MDE accountable for its programs and resources. These assessments should include an indication of whether

responsible parties meet the goals and objectives specified in the strategic plan, along with the costs of achieving these objectives.

Strategic Planning

Goal Setting

4. **The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by establishing realistic goals based on research data.**

   Goal setting theory holds that the setting of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals for an organization is a very powerful tool for motivating employees to achieve their maximum potential. The development of realistic goals requires research of relevant program data to determine which programs are capable of producing what level of improvement (see discussion of need for more research of the effectiveness of MDE programs on page 66).

   In general, in the field of public education, goals of incremental improvement over a five-year period are more realistic than goals of meeting 100% of the target measure (e. g., all students reading at third-grade level) by a certain date. Regardless, the main caution with goal setting is to conduct the research necessary to support the goal.

5. **The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by establishing interim progress goals for all three system goals.**

   MDE would have a better understanding of how realistic its target goal is by monitoring progress against interim goals. Measurement against interim goals is also more likely to result in more expedient action to adjust programs that are falling short of achieving their intended results. Further, the department could use the data resulting from measuring performance against interim goals to evaluate periods with slow rates of improvement against those periods with significant gains in improvement to identify and replicate those factors associated with significant gains.

6. **The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning process by refraining from tying goals and outcome measures to national averages.**

   As noted previously, the "national average" of any education measure is a constantly moving target over which the state has no control. As Mississippi students improve their achievement levels, in general, so do students in other states. A better goal for assessing the

performance of the state's educational system would be to target a specific level of performance on the national assessments by a targeted date.

Strategies, Outcome Measures, and Action Steps

7. **The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning by converting outcome measures to measurable terms.**

To be useful to the board as a management and accountability tool, all outcome measures included in the department's strategic plan should be stated in measurable terms so that the board can know at all times where it stands on the measure relative to where it wants to be by the target date. To be measurable, an outcome measure should include the following critical components:

- operational definitions of all key terms (e. g., definition of a "highly qualified administrator") based on objective, documentable evidence;
- a unit of measurement (e. g., score on a specific test, percent of students graduating or dropping out);
- the specific amount of the desired increase or decrease in the unit of measurement; and,
- a timeframe for achieving the desired change in the unit of measurement.

In other words, to be useful as an accountability tool, an outcome measure must be defined with sufficient precision such that any external reviewer of the data would draw the same conclusion regarding the department's performance on the measure.

PEER further notes that in setting target dates for its outcome measures, because the department's strategic plan is a five-year plan, it would be reasonable for the department to set its objectives to include this time frame (i. e., to include in its performance goals, if longer than five years, a goal of what the department believes it can realistically achieve on each measure at the end of the five years covered by the plan).

8. **The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning by improving consistency in designation of objectives as goals, strategies, or outcome measures.**

Consistently designating objectives as goals, strategies, or outcome measures would increase accountability by ensuring that the critical components of strategic planning are in place (i. e., measurable and research-based goals, strategies for achieving the goals, activities for carrying out the strategies, and outcome-based measures of success in carrying out the strategies).

9. **The Department of Education could improve its strategic planning by developing specific strategies for achieving each of the three system goals.**

To target its resources more effectively, the department should consider developing specific strategies (supported by action steps and measurable objectives [outcome measures] and timeframes) for achieving each of its three bold goals and report to the board at least annually on the progress being made toward achievement of each goal and each measurable objective for each of its strategies and on the costs associated with making the progress.

For example, in order to move the state toward reaching the goal of ensuring that all students exit the third grade reading on grade level by 2020 (see related discussion of the need to establish attainable goals based upon research data on page 35), the department should consider the following critical components of a strategic plan to achieve this goal:

- *identify the most appropriate measure* of "exiting the third grade reading on grade level" (based on a valid and reliable reading level test aligned with Mississippi's curriculum), establish where Mississippi public school students are relative to this goal, and establish benchmarks for reaching the 100% goal by the targeted date (currently 2020);
- *identify key strategies for achieving the goal*--e. g., develop and implement reading goals and state-of-the-art reading curriculum for children ages birth through third grade; develop and implement state-of-the art instructional methods for teaching reading to children from birth through third grade; develop and implement state-of-the-art testing for children from birth through third grade to identify physical, mental, or emotional impediments to acquiring the necessary reading skills (e. g., visual or hearing impediments, learning disabilities); develop and implement state-of-the-art testing aligned to the curriculum at each grade level to identify and quickly remediate any students who are having difficulty meeting annual yearly progress goals; and,
- *identify appropriate action steps and outcome measures* for each strategy (e. g., for the strategy of curriculum development and implementation, action steps would include steps taken by department staff to establish the appropriate curriculum and to communicate the curriculum to public school teachers; outcome measures would include measures of the adequacy of the curriculum as well as measures of how well the

state's public school teachers are implementing the curriculum in the classroom).

A strategic plan for this goal would also include action steps for:

- *identifying the most effective methods of teaching* the curriculum at each grade level through outcome-based research on Mississippi public school students;
- *helping to ensure that elementary education programs in the state's public and private universities include state-of-the-art instruction* in reading and maintain a current list of the schools that successfully incorporate this instruction into their programs; and,
- *increasing the number of students enrolling in elementary education programs* that successfully incorporate state-of-the-art instruction in reading into their curriculums.

Outcome measures would include tracking the percentage of children reading on grade level in grades K-2, as this would indicate progress being made toward meeting the ultimate goal of all students reading on grade level by the time that they exit the third grade.

By creating strategies and outcome measures structured around specific goals, the board would be in a better position to have the information necessary to know whether the department is on track to achieve its goal and if not, what needs to be done to alter its strategy and/or to acknowledge failure on achieving the goal and set a revised, more realistic goal.

Identify What is Under the Department's Control

10. The Department of Education should differentiate between outcome measures and activities that are under its direct control versus those under the control of external entities.

One of MDE's primary responsibilities is to administer federal grant program funds. For some programs, MDE has no discretion and is merely a conduit for the flow of funds to school districts. Determining what entity is accountable and for what results would be relatively simple for such ministerial duties. For other programs, however, MDE has the added responsibility of choosing grant recipients based on certain factors (e. g., best performers). It is imperative that levels of accountability for these duties be determined during the strategic planning process so that results may be attributed to those responsible.

Link Resource Allocation to the Strategic Plan

11. The Board of Education should align resource allocation (both financial and staffing) with its strategic plan.

One of the seven principles of performance management (refer to discussion on page 28) is the alignment of resources (financial and staffing) with priorities and desired results. Also, MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-3 (1972) requires that the board base its budget on its strategic plan. Therefore, the board should align its budget with the strategic plan.

Further, the department should redefine its "programs" as identified in the budget request to correspond with the actual programs of the department, which should be clearly identified. The proposed programs should be submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee for approval.

These actions would help the board to hold MDE accountable by knowing to what extent resources are being attributed to certain priorities.

Assess Staffing Patterns Periodically

12. To help ensure efficient use of staff in accomplishing educational goals, the Department of Education should periodically assess staffing patterns in relation to departmental workload and long-range plans for educational improvement, particularly in the area of improving instruction.

The scope of PEER's review did not include determining how staff resources might be better allocated. As a result, this report does not include specific recommendations for redeploying certain staff. However, PEER notes that MDE is responsible for providing instructional leadership and service responsibilities. Therefore, the department should study the department's current organization, staffing, and workload in relation to board priorities. This study should result in recommendations for the reallocation of resources. Special attention should be given to the area of improved instruction statewide.

Improve Reporting of Expenditures for Contract Staff

13. To establish accountability for contract staff, the Department of Education should improve its reporting of contractual expenditures for contract staff, annually compiling a summary report of categorized contractual service expenditures that provides the contract purpose, the expenditure amounts, the number of contracts, and retiree status of contractors.

A report of this nature would allow the board members to monitor with more ease and accuracy where the contractual expenditures are going and potentially enhance the board's ability to track and establish contracting policy on the most critical contractual focus areas.

Apply Principles of Performance-Based Contracting

14. To enhance accountability for contract staff by focusing on end results, the Board of Education should familiarize itself with the elements of performance-based contracting and apply those principles when reviewing contract expenditure information presented by the department's staff.

To enhance accountability for contract staff by focusing on end results, the board should refer to Appendix J on page 134 regarding performance-based contracting. Performance-based contracting has the following key elements:

- the contract must describe the requirements in terms of results rather than the methods of performance of the work;
- the contract must include measurable performance standards (in terms of quality, timeliness, etc.);
- the contract must include a quality assurance plan that focuses on how the contractor's performance will be evaluated; and,
- the contract should provide for incentives.

Measurement and Reporting

Improve the Quality of Performance Measures

15. The Department of Education should improve the identification and use of its performance measures.

PEER determined the following strategies for improving the identification and use of performance measures for the Department of Education:

- shift from output measures to more meaningful outcome measures;
- develop interim outcome measures through logic models; and,
- report both inputs and outputs when outcomes are not feasible so that, at a minimum, the board knows what resources are dedicated to areas in which results cannot be measured.

As a result of using these strategies, MDE should be able to use outcome measures to focus its activities. Such

improvements would help the board determine whether MDE is doing the best it can to contribute to the desired long-term outcomes, which are to increase student learning and for the student "to take his or her place in society and make a contribution as a citizen of this state" (MISS. CODE ANN. 37-1-2 (n) [1972]).

In addition, the improvements to performance measures would provide a better understanding as to how staff should revise its efforts in order to improve programs or implement new ones. By focusing on good measures that reflect the comprehensive efforts of its staff (in light of closely related responsibilities at the local level), the board could establish accountability for MDE's use of departmental resources.

Shift from Output Measures to Outcome Measures

Opportunity for Teacher Center Example (page 63)

The Department of Education's Teacher Center should have an accountability system in place to track and report on the outcome measures of effectiveness and efficiency through the long-term recruitment and retention of the Teacher Center's program participants. These measures should shift from outputs to more meaningful outcome measures in an effort to hold MDE accountable for results.

MDE and the Board of Education would benefit from receiving outcome-oriented information related to the retention of teachers. Specifically, the MSTC should establish a formal goal in regard to the retention rate of teachers in the state in addition to the target number of teachers recruited in critical shortage areas, since one goal of the MSTC is to also retain quality teachers through enhancement programs.

The MSTC should work with the offices of Research and Statistics and Educational Licensure in order to collect and report the necessary data to provide a long-term teacher retention rate for teachers who participate in the teacher recruitment incentive programs. Also, the Mississippi Teacher Center could establish an efficiency measure for the program by calculating the amount spent annually on the incentive programs in relation to the number of years the participants of their respective program were retained. This would allow the MSTC to establish an accountability system that focuses on the long-term effectiveness of its programs and thus target available resources more effectively.

Opportunity for Office of School Improvement Example (page 63)

The Department of Education could use outcome-oriented information from findings of the Office of School Improvement in at-risk schools to determine what interventions produce the best outcomes and subsequently develop training for other schools.

MDE and the Board of Education would benefit from receiving outcome-oriented information related to training that could be developed based on what the Office of School Improvement is finding in the schools on the "schools at risk" list.

The office could undertake a process in which it looks at the leadership, the curriculum, the delivery of instruction, and the school climate of each school on the "schools at risk" list. The office could then use these findings as a guide to deliver training to other schools not yet on the "schools at risk" list but in danger of being placed on the list. The training could then be linked by school, by teacher, and by student to determine what interventions are producing the best outcomes.

Develop Interim Outcome Measures through Logic Models

The Department of Education should develop immediate and intermediate outcomes through logic models, which focus on an agency's work and how that work connects to outcomes.

Exhibit 15, page 95, is an example of the "so that" logic model, presented by the State of Washington's Office of Financial Management, related to statewide curriculum frameworks.

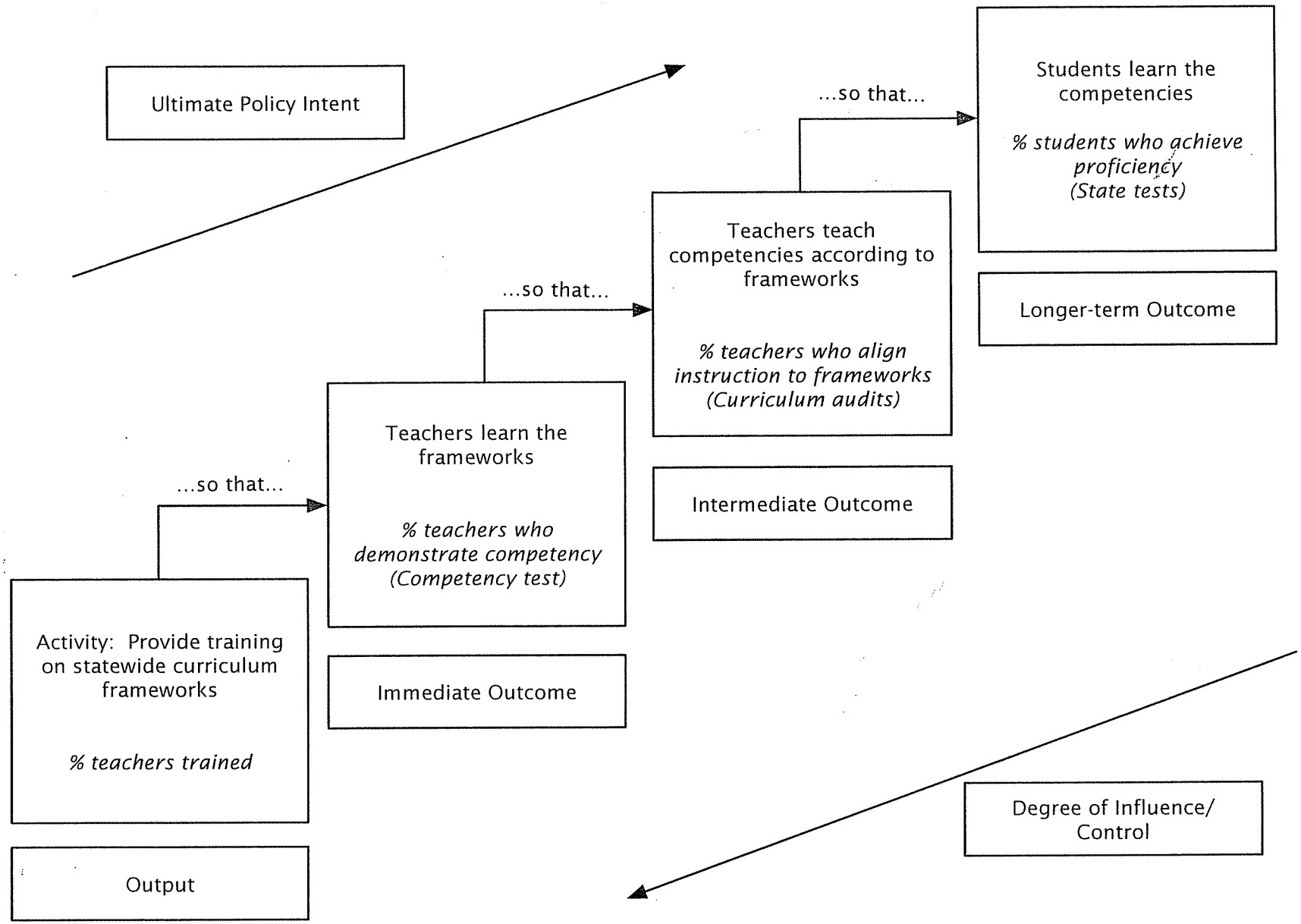
What is a Logic Model?

PEER determined that logic models could be the most effective way for MDE to demonstrate how its work connects to outcomes like student achievement.

There are several types of logic models; however, they all focus on the work the agency does and how that work connects to outcomes. The State of Washington's Office of Financial Management describes a "So That" logic model, which establishes a theory of causation. The model connects things within the agency's control to things that are outside the agency's control but are influenced by the agency's activities (i. e., outcomes).

To create this model, members of the agency would start with the intended outcome and then determine which measures the agency can control and leverage in order to affect the outcome. This model provides a way to connect activities to results.

Exhibit 15: Example of a "So That" Logic Model Related to Statewide Curriculum Frameworks



SOURCE: PEER analysis using model from the State of Washington's Office of Financial Management

The model consists of a set of boxes connected by "so that" arrows. Members of the agency would write part of the process (whether it be outputs, processes or inputs) into the first box. They would then ask "Why do we do that? Why do we care about that? What do we want to happen because of that?" The result should be a series of boxes that show the agency does X so that Y happens. The final box should be the statewide result or ultimate outcome. Once completed, possible performance measures should be written for each step (box) in the logic model.

Using such a method to connect each of MDE's major activities to outcomes would provide the board and departmental managers with a better idea of who is responsible and for what results.

Using a Logic Model to Develop Interim Outcome Measures for Curriculum Frameworks

An important function of MDE is to not only create and revise the curriculum frameworks for statewide implementation, but to provide teachers with training on those frameworks. MDE develops each framework, which is the basis for curriculum development for teachers. The framework is an outline of what students should know and be able to do through competencies and objectives.

In this example, the percentage of teachers trained on the frameworks would be an output measure. It provides no insight into whether the teacher teaches according to the frameworks or whether students actually learn what is taught. An immediate outcome in the example would be a measure that shows the percentage of teachers who actually learn the frameworks, as evidenced by a frameworks competency test. Such a test would provide MDE and other stakeholders with assurance that teachers are competent to teach those areas to which they are assigned.

An intermediate outcome would include a measure that shows the percentage of teachers that actually align their instruction to the frameworks. North Dakota recommended conducting curriculum audits in order to determine whether what is being taught is aligned to the frameworks. Specifically, the audits are intended to:

- determine what is being taught and if it is consistent between teachers in a building and among teachers within a district;
- align key concepts identified in the curriculum to state and district standards to determine gaps and overlaps; and,

- find out the instructional approaches that teachers are using and how the students are learning.

In the example, the ultimate outcome is that students learn according to the curriculum frameworks (and thus presumably acquire the knowledge needed to be successful beyond high school). This could be measured by the percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency on state tests.

The reader should note that as the ultimate policy intent increases, the degree of influence and control MDE would decrease. Thus, the best indicators to hold MDE accountable would be the immediate outcomes and the intermediate outcomes.

If state tests showed that students did not master the material, MDE would not know where the breakdown occurred in the example unless it had collected the immediate and intermediate outcome measures in addition to the output and ultimate outcome. These measures would provide MDE an understanding of how to focus its efforts (e. g., more effective training on frameworks so that teachers actually master the content).

By decreasing the time dedicated to developing Mississippi's own curriculum frameworks and adopting the common core, the Office of Curriculum and Instruction could spend more time assessing the alignment of the frameworks to instruction. MDE and the Board of Education should then shift resources in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and the Office of Student Assessment to those areas where weaknesses exist.

Report Inputs and Outputs When Outcome Measures are Not Feasible

The Department of Education should report inputs, outputs, and outcomes for departments or programs when feasible so that the board knows to what extent resources are dedicated to areas in which results cannot be determined.

The board could benefit from regularly receiving input, output, and outcome information related to specific programs and departments. Specifically, the following elements should be made available to the board for ongoing programs:

- the number of employees assigned to the department or program;
- the number of contractors employed by the department or program;
- dollars expended for the department or program; and,
- the results achieved by the program (outcomes).

For new programs, the board should ensure that outcomes are clearly stated and measurable so that progress can be gauged over time.

In cases where outcomes are not feasible, then reporting on the inputs and outputs is beneficial. For example, the Reading Fair is intended to encourage reading among students, which is difficult to measure. The board would benefit from knowing the amount of resources expended for this program to determine whether it is worth those resources without being able to obtain measurable results.

Data Systems and Research

Utilize Grant Funding for Development of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System

16. **In June 2009 and May 2010, the U. S. Department of Education awarded Mississippi grants--one for $3.4 million and one for $7.6 million--to design and implement a statewide longitudinal data system. By the end of the second grant period in 2013, MDE expects to have a relational database linking all education (K-20) and workforce data.**

The United States Department of Education awarded Mississippi two grants totaling approximately $11 million to design and implement a statewide longitudinal data system. The first grant period began in June 2009 and will end in May 2012. The primary purpose of this grant is to expand and integrate existing K-12 statewide data systems. The second grant period began in July 2010 and will end in June 2013. The second grant proposal describes the system as a three-year project that will create a relational database linking all education (K-20) and workforce data through a unique student identifier that does not permit an individual to be identified by users of the system. The system will be a one-stop, online portal that will provide access to the relational database and make the system universally interoperable.

According to the Data Quality Campaign,[7] MDE collects the ten elements necessary for a longitudinal data system capable of providing stakeholders with information to adjust policies that affect student performance. Each data system collects relevant data that could be linked to build a longitudinal data system. Elements are in place so that data for a student in MDE's data system can be matched with data for the same student in the state's postsecondary education data system and with data for

[7] The *Data Quality Campaign*, the result of a collaborative effort of more than fifty organizations nationwide, is an effort to encourage and support state policymakers to improve the availability and use of high-quality education data to improve student performance. The campaign provides resources to help states implement and use longitudinal data systems, while providing a national forum for reducing duplication of effort and promoting greater coordination and consensus among the organizations focused on improving data quality, access, and use.

the same student in the state's workforce data system. Further, elements are in place so that data for a student in the state's postsecondary education data system can be matched with data for a student in the state's workforce data system.

As stated previously, Mississippi's data systems do not have a unique identifier. To overcome this limitation, an algorithm that uses the Social Security number as the base for creating a unique ten-digit identifier can be used to create a unique student identifier that enables the tracking of a student over time and across programs.

To make full use of this data system, MDE needs access to individuals with high-level analytical skills and research training to explore the data and to answer policy and evaluation questions. Through the formation of strategic partnerships with universities and organizations that conduct educational research, MDE will receive the information and analyses that can inform decision-making and improve student performance.

The proposal for the longitudinal data system includes a method for linking student-level data to teachers. Further, teachers could be linked to information on certification and preparation programs. Therefore, Mississippi would be able to estimate school and teacher effects on student performance. This is referred to as *value added modeling* (VAM).

The RAND Corporation[8] notes that policymakers see VAM as a possible component of education reform through improved teacher evaluations or as part of test-based accountability. Further, VAM uses complex statistical methods that can provide estimates of the effects of teachers and schools without being distorted by outside factors such as family background.

RAND cautions that many issues need to be resolved before VAM is implemented. If not, VAM could misjudge the effectiveness of teachers and schools and could ultimately be detrimental to educational improvement. Extensive time and research will be needed to develop the data system needed to accomplish what it is intended to accomplish.

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[8] The *RAND Corporation* is a nonprofit institution that conducts research and analysis to improve policy and decision-making.

Use Research on Outcome Measures to Demonstrate Overall Effectiveness of Programs

17. **The federal government has established meaningful outcome measures that the Department of Education could use as models for indicators of overall program or system effectiveness.**

Examples of the federal government's outcome measures in the area of vocational education include:

- the percentage of students who completed two-year programs and were placed in the military, advanced education, or employment;
- the percentage of participants from programs in nontraditional fields who were in an underrepresented gender group that participated in a program that leads to employment in a nontraditional field; and,
- the percentage of participants from programs in nontraditional fields who completed a program that leads to employment in a nontraditional field.

Examples in the area of special education include:

- the percentage of youth with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma; and,
- the percentage of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school, and who have been employed, enrolled in postsecondary school or both within one year of leaving high school.

Produce Multi-Year Trend Reports

18. **To provide for better analyses of student performance data, the Department of Education should produce multi-year trend reports for districts. MDE could connect staff from the Office of Research and Statistics to district staff in order to increase the level of analysis and interpretation of student performance data.**

MDE does not produce multi-year trend analysis information for districts related to student performance. As a result, year-by-year student performance results could be misleading. The National Association of State Boards of Education states that year-to-year fluctuations in assessment results are typically statistically insignificant. It is more important to look at multi-year trends that demonstrate a clear movement of scores in one direction.

As mentioned on page 74, MDE has adopted a new accountability model. The old model did not provide trend data in report form to the districts. The districts were provided annual data and imported it into their own programs to view trends. The new model, however, allows

for such reports, although they have not been generated because MDE only has one year's worth of results.

According to MDE, it has plans to develop reports that show trends as well as predictive reports that visualize students' potential future performance based on past performance. These plans are included in all federal grants currently submitted to the U. S. Department of Education. After another year's worth of results, MDE plans to begin developing these reports.

Use a "Data Dashboard"

19. The Department of Education's implementation of a visual instrument that contains key indicators of performance (i. e., a "data dashboard") would enable the board to see, at a glance, whether current efforts toward meeting its goals are on track and to respond quickly and appropriately when problems arise.

The board needs access to a visual instrument that synthesizes the vast amounts of data that MDE collects and that presents the information in a manner that is accessible to non-data experts.

A *data dashboard* is a visual instrument that would enable the Board of Education to monitor key indicators of system performance including, but not limited to, indicators of student performance (achievement scores), indicators of department performance (recruitment and retention of teachers), and indicators of financial performance (fiscal management). The indicators would enable the Board of Education to see, at a glance, whether current improvement efforts are on track and to respond appropriately when problems arise. The indicators also would enable MDE to communicate its priorities and its progress to the public effectively and clearly.

In order for a data dashboard to be effective, the board must work closely with MDE administrators to set the goals for MDE; then, in turn, MDE administrators should work closely with program staff to determine meaningful indicators that are true measures of progress toward the goals that the board has set.

The data dashboard should clearly state the goals that the Board of Education has set for MDE. The status of each goal should be shown by multiple indicator clusters that are connected to that goal. The status of each indicator cluster should then be measured by multiple indicators that are connected to that indicator cluster. Thus, interconnected data would be grouped together in different tiers of the instrument to show the status of progress toward each goal.

According to the Director of the Office of Research and Statistics, the program and office staff at MDE should understand the interconnectedness of the data at MDE

before a data dashboard is presented to the board. According to the director, there is a lack of understanding as to what constitutes reliable data and how the data collected by one program or office may be influenced by data collected by another program or office. A data education initiative could be needed in order for staff to understand the interconnectedness of the data and in order to build a useful instrument.

Opportunity: Changes in Educational Standards and Programs

Measure and Manage Change

20. **In order to mitigate the challenges of changing standards and programs, both the Board of Education and the Department of Education could benefit from focusing additional effort on developing performance management capacity supported by a full complement of sound measurement tools (i. e., longitudinal data systems, creative use of multiple indicators, a data dashboard).**

Changes in standards and programs inhibit the ability to measure accurately and manage progress toward critical goals. Therefore, the creative application of the principles of performance management is even more critical in a changing environment. (See page 28 for a discussion of performance management.) One of the primary elements of performance management is a process for analyzing and reporting performance data so that is useful to management, policy makers, and the public. The analysis and reporting of data must take into consideration and clearly communicate the possible effects of any significant change in standards or measurement.

The board and the department must clearly define the strengths and weaknesses of their available measurement tools and whether those tools are adequate to an ever-changing educational environment. Where needed, the board and the department should consider developing a long-term plan for systematic improvement of measurement systems and processes. In addition, the board and the department should undertake an internal analysis of how to employ more effectively existing research capacities to improve the ability to assess the impact of change, including the building of comprehensive longitudinal data systems and user-friendly data dashboards to measure and report the impact of changes in the educational system.

The data dashboard should communicate clearly to the board whether the state is moving in a positive direction, based on multiple key indicators. The dashboard should provide a glance at whether improvement efforts are on track or whether changes to the system have had a positive or negative effect. Important to the discussion of change, the data dashboard must include proper analyses of critical environmental changes before inferences are made. For example, changes to the assessment system or accountability system could lead to seemingly negative results without proper analysis and communication of the actual comparative effects of the new assessment system

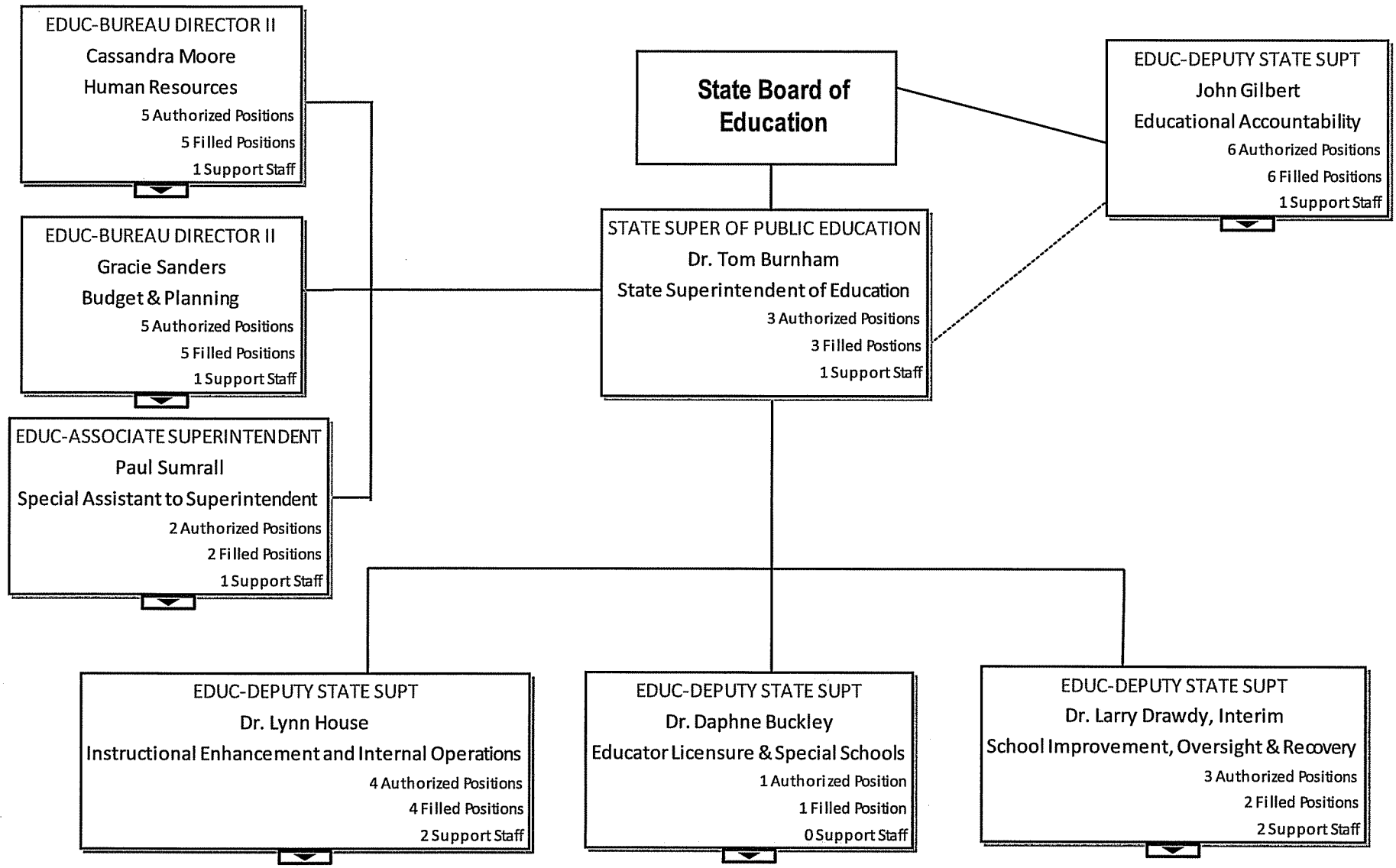
over the old. Only then can the department clearly communicate the actual impact of any significant changes to educational standards and programs.

Part IV

Appendices

Phase II - Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Core Structure

****(48) Positions/PINS are unfunded/undesignated, and are not included in the counts. Positions/PINS could be later funded and designated to a particular office.**



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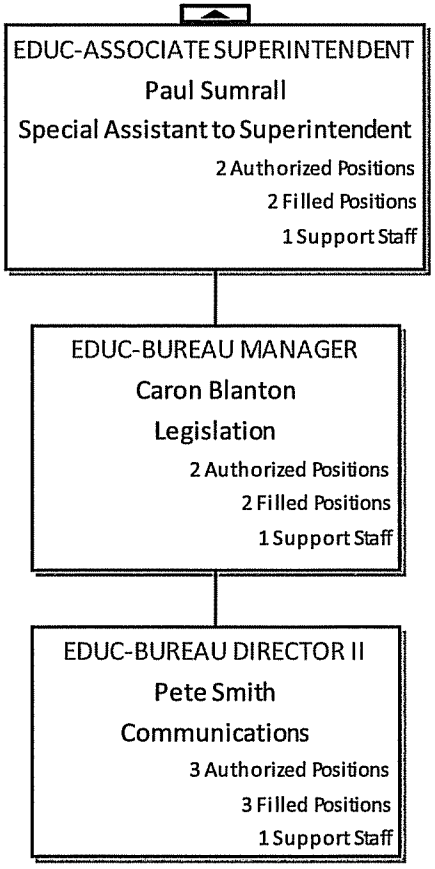

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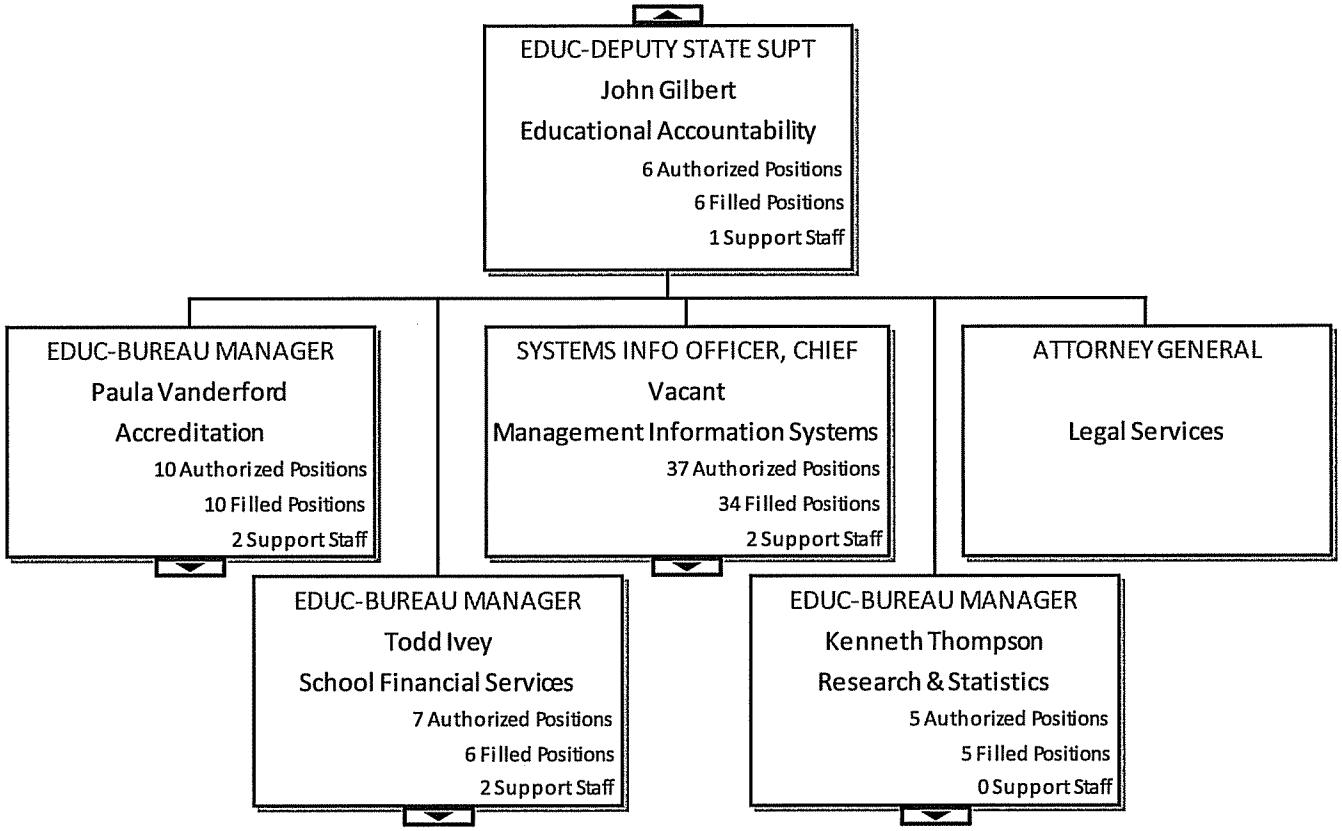

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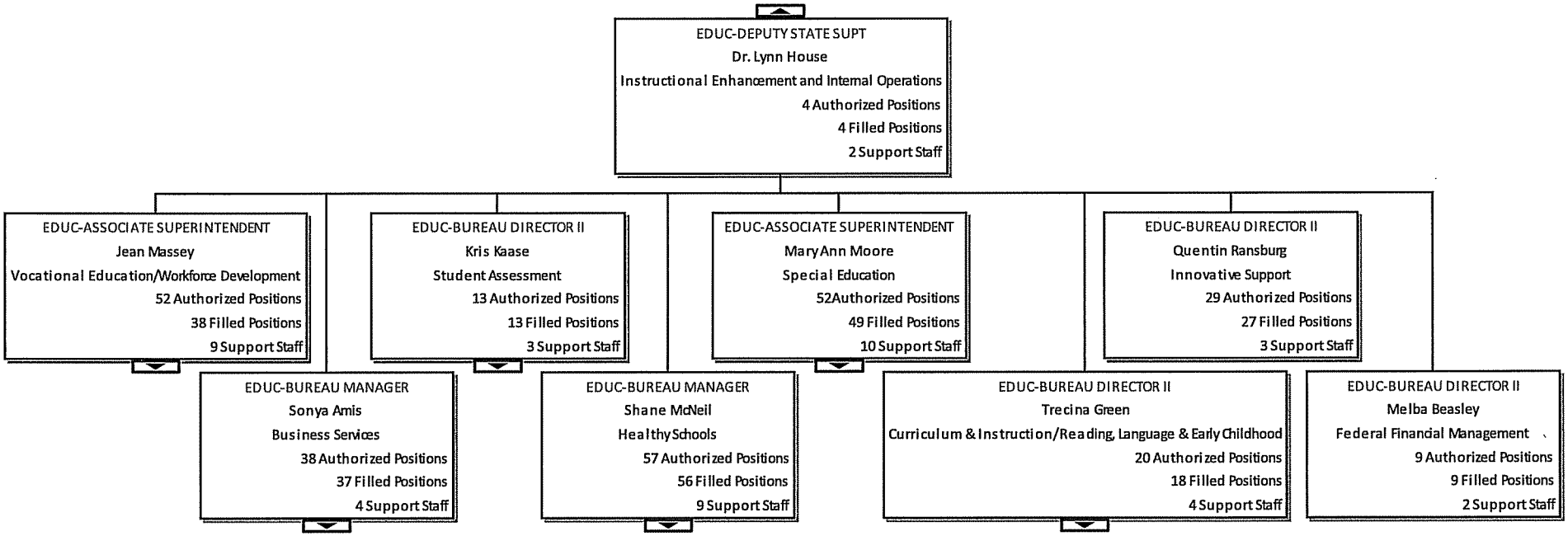

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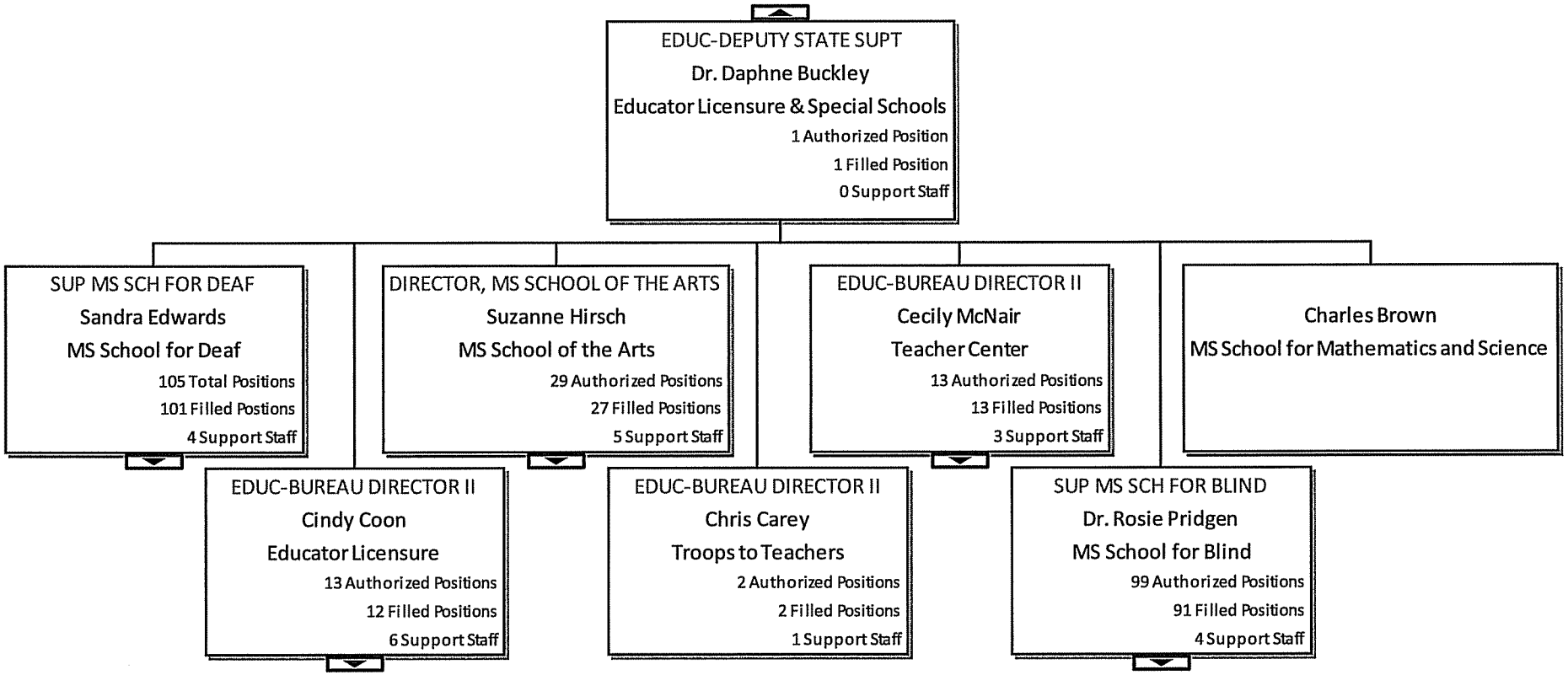

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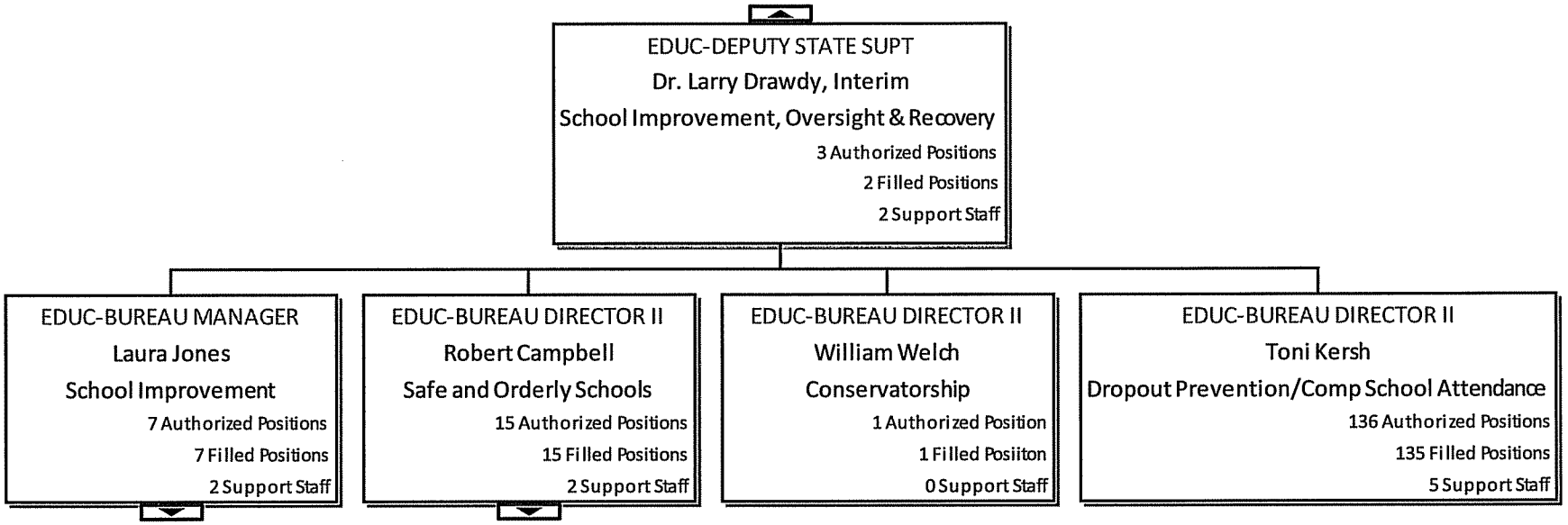

Appendix B: Major Provisions of Selected Federal Acts Related to Education

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

In 2002, the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (NCLB) was signed into law, which is the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The act places great importance on the assessment of students and accountability for performance.

NCLB's requirements for states include the following:

- develop challenging academic standards that are the same for every student;
- develop annual academic assessments for all students;
- ensure that there is a highly qualified teacher in every classroom;
- define the amount of academic progress that districts/schools must achieve each year in order to reach the proficiency goal by 2014;
- ensure that schools and districts test at least 95% of all students;
- determine a minimum size for required subgroups of students to be included in yearly progress calculations, based on technical considerations;
- ensure availabilities of reasonable adaptations and accommodations for students with disabilities; and,
- produce an annual statewide report card of performance available to the public.

Under NCLB, states must assess students against English and math standards in grades 3-8 and once in grades 10-12. Additionally, states must administer science assessments at least once in elementary (grades 3-5), middle (grades 6-9), and high school (grades 10-12). States must also participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in which a sample of students from each state must be tested in English and math in fourth and eighth grades.

NCLB requires that all children be at the proficient level (set by individual states) on state testing by the 2013-2014 school year. Individual schools must meet state "adequate yearly progress" targets toward this goal (based on a formula spelled out in the law) for both their student populations as a whole and for certain demographic

subgroups. If a school receiving federal Title I funding does not meet the target two years in a row, it must be provided technical assistance and its students must be offered a choice of other public schools to attend. Students in schools that fail to make adequate progress three years in a row must also be offered supplemental educational services, including private tutoring. For continued failures, a school would be subject to outside corrective measures, including possible governance changes.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA focuses on individual children and seeks to ensure specialized services for children with disabilities so they can benefit from education. IDEA's requirements for states include the following:

- establish a goal of providing full educational opportunity to all children with disabilities and a timetable for accomplishing that goal;
- identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities residing in the state who are in need of special education services;
- ensure that all special education teachers are highly qualified;
- evaluate every child suspected of having a disability;
- annually develop an Individual Education Plan for each child with a disability;
- provide education services in the least restrictive environment;
- provide all procedural safeguards to children and parents;
- establish goals for the performance of children with disabilities that are the same as the state's definition of adequate yearly progress; and,
- include all children with disabilities in all general state and district-wide assessment programs (must be given appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments as indicated in Individual Education Plans).

Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act was first authorized by the federal government in 1984 and reauthorized in 1998. The act aims to increase

the quality of technical education within the United States in order to help the economy.

On August 12, 2006, President Bush signed into law the reauthorization of the act of 1998. The new law includes new requirements for "programs of study" that link academic and technical content across secondary and postsecondary education.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education website and documents from the Mississippi Department of Education.

Appendix C: A Handbook on Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is important because it defines who the agency is in the context of its legal mandates, where the agency currently is in terms of executing its legal responsibilities efficiently and effectively, what the agency has to work with, and what strategies and activities the agency needs to undertake in order to better execute its legal responsibilities, both in the short term and the long term.

Strategic planning could have a major impact on the Board of Education's ability to:

- hold the department accountable by identifying and defining critical measures of success;
- make informed decisions regarding resource allocations, both financial and personnel; and,
- adapt successfully to an ever-changing environment.

What are Strategic Management and Strategic Planning?

Strategic management is applied by leaders to align an organization's direction with that organization's aims. Strategic planning, the major tool of strategic management, is where an entity develops long-term goals for itself and then develops an action plan designed to achieve those goals.

What is Strategic Management?

Strategic management is the ongoing process of ensuring a superior fit between the organization and its ever-changing environment. Strategic management of public organizations often poses the "what" and "how" questions to managers. The "what" question concerns content. What does a strategy look like and how can organizational leaders use it to effect change in their organizations? The "how" question concerns the process. How can organizational leaders create a strategy that can then be used by their organizations? Leaders use strategic management to align an organization's direction with the organization's aims. This alignment takes place when needed changes in clients or customers, services, procedures, policies, and the like are devised and put into practice.

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a document that lays out an organization's vision, mission statement, critical success factors, core competencies, values, goals, strategies and actions for objectives (i. e., a means by which to achieve the organization's mission, vision, and goals), prioritized implementation schedule, and reliable measures by which to determine the success of the organization in achieving its goals.

However, to be able to develop a strategic plan, a state agency must first clearly understand its legal purpose and responsibilities. As discussed on page 21, state law sets out very broad and ambitious objectives for public education in Mississippi, which must be acted upon by all actors in the state's public education system, including but not limited to, MDE--e. g., quality education for all school-age children in the state, excellence, and high achievement by all students. The law also includes more specific mandates for the Department of Education--e. g., establishment of a public school accreditation system based on instructional effectiveness that provides for a state response when the performance of a school is inadequate.

Why is Strategic Planning Important?

Why is strategic planning important? In *Management*, Robert Kreitner quotes then-Exxon Company U.S.A. Compensation Manager Douglas Gehrman on the following eight reasons for planning:

- increases chances of success by focusing on results, not activities;
- forces analytical thinking and evaluation of alternatives, thus improving decisions;
- establishes a framework for decisionmaking consistent with top management's objectives;
- orients people to action instead of reaction;
- modifies style from day-to-day managing to future-focused managing;
- helps avoid crisis management and provides decisionmaking flexibility;
- provides a basis for measuring organizational and individual performance; and,
- increases employee involvement and improves communication.

Core Concepts of Strategic Planning

For a strategic plan to be successful, the plan must cover the entire organization; the plan must have a time frame in which to measure success and progress; and the plan must have a defined mission and vision in which to establish the agency's purpose and standards for success.

A United, Consolidated Strategic Plan

The goal of strategic planning is to direct all agency resources and activities towards the achievement of common objectives. As a result, agencies should develop a single agency-wide strategic plan.

Since the state of Mississippi has no explicit guidelines for strategic planning efforts within the state beyond those issued by the Legislative Budget Office (see page 44), PEER reviewed multiple information sources for developing a strategic planning manual. For overarching guidelines and best practices recommendations and analytical tools, PEER turned to the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Executive Office of the President.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, "a strategic plan must cover the major functions and operations of the agency [it was created for]." The OMB also states that agencies "should submit a single agency-wide plan," although OMB does state that "an agency with widely disparate functions [is able] to prepare several strategic plans for its major components or programs."

Time Frame for Strategic Plans

Strategic planning over a specified period provides a road map for the agency's programmatic and resource allocation decisions, both short-term and long-term.

As discussed on page 33, both MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-103-129 (1972) and MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-1-3 (1972) require MDE to design and maintain a five-year strategic plan.

According to the Office Of Management and Budget, "a strategic plan [should] cover a minimum of six years," but could be for a longer period, especially if it contains a project completion goal that is ten years into the future.

The Foundation for Community Association Research cites John B. Cox's "Professional Practices in Association Management" in recommending that strategic plans cover "a three- to five-year period." The foundation also recommends that a strategic plan "be a living document that has a one-year drop off and a new year added so that

[the strategic plan] always covers the same time period." This also would allow for goals that have been achieved to be removed from the plan, current goals to be updated as to their success or future growth, and new goals to be added. Subsequent changes in creation of objectives and action plans should follow adjustments or additions of goals.

Mission and Vision

For an organization to be successful, it must know who it is and what its purpose is. An organization must also lay out an image of success in which to define and plan for its future.

To be able to develop a strategic plan, an organization must first determine who it is, what its purpose is, and where it wants to be in the future. For a state agency, the questions of identity and purpose are defined in state law. Informally, answers to these questions combine to form the organization's mission and vision statements. Formally speaking, an organization's mission statement defines its social justification for existence and defines where the agency is going. An organization's vision statement then provides a shared mental image describing what the organization should look like once it has successfully implemented its strategies and achieved its potential. However, in order to develop strategies, an organization must fully understand the following:

- Who are they as an organization?
- What does the organization do?
- How does the organization currently do things?
- How does the organization stand within its external environment?
- What are the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses?
- What opportunities are available for the organization to pursue?
- What threats are there for the organization to minimize/avoid?
- What are the organization's options for moving forward?

To answer these questions, the organization must develop research to gather information about the above questions so that the organization can develop strategies to achieve its mission and vision based on the factors affecting the organization.

Research and Analysis

The research and analysis stage is the backbone of strategic planning. By completing the research and analysis stage, the organization will fully understand its internal workings, along with the external environmental factors that affect the organization. With such information, the organization will be able to develop strategies capable of achieving the organization's mission and vision.

For an organization to develop a successful comprehensive strategic plan, it is vital that the organization learn about what it is and the factors affecting the organization. Through research and analysis, the organization will be able to define both the internal and external factors affecting the organization, as well as the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Types of analysis often used in strategic planning are:

- stakeholder analysis;
- environmental analysis (external and internal);
- service delivery structure analysis;
- organization systems and process analysis;
- human resource/management analysis;
- governance analysis; and,
- financial/feasibility/cost benefit analysis.

Stakeholder Analysis

According to Bryson, an organization should complete at least the first few steps of a stakeholder analysis before developing a mission statement. A stakeholder is defined as "any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources, or output or is affected by that output." In the case of MDE, stakeholders include, but are not limited to, other providers of services supporting the state's public education system, staff of the state's 152 school districts, students, their parents and the general citizenry. According to Bryson, "attention to stakeholder concerns is crucial" because "the key to success for public and non-profit organizations is the satisfaction of key stakeholders."

The first few steps in a stakeholder analysis require the strategic planning team to identify who the organization's stakeholders are, what their criteria are for judging the organization's performance (i. e., what is their stake in the organization or its output), and how well the organization performs according to those criteria from the stakeholder point of view. Once completed, a stakeholder analysis should "clarify whether the organization needs to have different missions and perhaps different strategies for

different stakeholders and whether it should seek to have its mandates changed."

Environmental Analysis

An organization should conduct an environmental analysis (scan and assessment) in order to consider conditions and trends in both the external and internal environments of the organization that may impact the future success of the organization. The results of the environmental analysis are then assessed to identify the opportunities and threats presented by factors in the external environment and the strengths and challenges presented by factors in the organization's internal environment. The assessment of an organization's strengths, weaknesses (challenges), opportunities, and threats is called a SWOT analysis.

External Environmental Analysis

Monitoring an organization's external environment should identify all opportunities for and threats against the organization from outside the control of the organization. Opportunities and threats tend to pertain to the future rather than the present and can be discovered by monitoring a variety of demographic, political, economic, social, technological, educational, environmental, and physical environmental forces and trends. Attention to opportunities and threats, along with a stakeholder analysis, can be used to identify an organization's critical success factors. "Success factors are the things an organization must do or the criteria it must meet in order to be successful in relating to its external environment."

Internal Environmental Analysis

Monitoring an organization's internal environment should identify all strengths and weaknesses inside the control of the organization. Strengths and weaknesses focus on the present organization and can be discovered by monitoring an organization's resources (inputs), present strategy (process), and performance (outputs).

Service Delivery Structure Analysis

The purpose of the service delivery structure analysis segment of the strategic plan is to develop a plan for delivery of agency services. The service delivery structure analysis should provide a background to current activities and then identify and develop key strategies to address the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the agency's service capacities. Budgetary and fiscal constraints must be factored in. Key issues such as locational, budgetary

and staffing requirements are typically identified following an evaluation of key service delivery performance drivers.

Organization Systems and Process Analysis

The purpose of the organization systems and process analysis of the strategic plan is to develop strategies to address the key issues (strengths, weaknesses, and gaps) within the organization's systems and processes that drive organizational performance. Performance reviews to improve internal organization systems and processes typically include an assessment of the following areas: quality management, risk management, regulatory compliance, information management and security, financial management, employee performance and morale, stakeholder relationships, board and management performance, future planning and ongoing innovation, performance improvement across the organization (including performance indicators and targets), and management of the environmental and social impacts of the organization's operations.

One of the major stumbling blocks to measuring an organization's strengths and weaknesses is the lack of performance indicators and performance analysis capable of detecting and presenting problems both for the organization and its wide variety of stakeholders. "An absence of performance information may also create--or harden--major organizational conflicts" because "without performance criteria and information, there is no way to evaluate the relative effectiveness of alternative strategies, resource allocations, organizational designs, and distribution of power."

Human Resource/Management Analysis

Since the service delivery structure analysis segment of strategic planning should provide new service delivery projections and targets for the agency, current organizational structures and human resource capabilities may require improvement to meet increasing agency demands. The organizational and management analysis segment should include an analysis of the current situation and future demand projections for the agency to identify key organizational and human resource issues that must be addressed if these future demand projections are to be adequately met by the department. Strategies with key performance measures and targets to address these key organizational and human resource issues should be developed. Areas to be addressed, both the current situation and the future, typically include:

- organizational chart;

- management team and their resumés;
- staffing requirements;
- job descriptions and work design for management and staff;
- performance standards, measurements, and feedback;
- management and staff training and development;
- recruitment and induction;
- encouraging innovation across the agency;
- providing leadership and building morale;
- occupational health and safety;
- wages; and,
- other relevant human resource issues.

Governance Analysis

Areas of governance typically include agency structures, enabling statutes, board of directors (size and composition), duties and responsibilities of the board, board performance, and board advisors.

Financial/Feasibility/Cost Benefit Analysis

The first purpose of the financial analysis segment of the strategic plan is to develop a set of financials for the duration of the plan based on the strategies and plans formulated in previous sections, calculated costs, and revenue projected. These financials should include key financial performance indicators and related performance targets.

Every organization has numerous strategies it wants to pursue, but not all of them are feasible and/or cost-effective considering we all operate in an environment with limited resources. As a result, before strategies should be pursued, an organization should conduct a feasibility analysis and a cost-benefit analysis for each proposed strategy/plan. A feasibility study is "an inquiry to determine what can be achieved given certain specified resources and constraints." A cost-benefit analysis is a "branch of operations research that aids in evaluating the implications of alternative courses of action"). A cost-benefit analysis not only allows an organization to determine cost and projected benefit (both economic and social), but also to be able to assign priority to different strategic objectives based on the cost-benefit analysis combined with a short-term and long-term needs assessment.

Other Elements of a Strategic Plan

Other elements of a strategic plan include organizational values, critical success factors, core competencies, goals and objectives, strategies with defined action/task plans, and performance indicators.

Organizational Values (Culture)

Organizational values define the culture of each organization. These values are an organization's essential, lasting values that should not be compromised or short-changed for expediency, financial reasons, or for other values that have been identified as important, but would not be considered "essential" to providing critical services.

Critical Success Factors

Critical success factors are the factors/conditions that must exist in order for an organization to achieve its goals. Critical success indicators (operational objectives) are measures, or gauges, of progress toward achieving desired levels of performance in terms of critical success factors.

Core Competencies

Core competencies are the organizational skills that are vital in achieving an organization's mission. Core competencies are a set of unique internal skills, processes, and systems that are critical to the success of the organization.

Goals and Objectives

The purpose of establishing strategic goals is to provide a clear and well-marked pathway for achieving the aim (purpose) of the strategic plan. To establish clear, concise, action-oriented goals, the goals should be specific, measurable, action-oriented, affordable, achievable, and time-bound. To ensure the strategic plan has a sharp focus, the number of key goals should be limited.

After each goal has been clearly formulated, a set of supporting objectives and strategies should be developed. Objectives define the best pathway for achieving each goal. Objectives should also meet the criteria listed above (e. g., specific, measurable).

Strategies with Defined Action/Task Plans

Strategies define the pathway for achieving each objective. According to Bryson, a strategy is defined "as a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, actions, decisions, or resource allocations that define what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it. Strategies can vary by level, by function, and by time frame."

Bryson notes that an effective strategy must meet the following criteria. First, a strategy must be technically workable, politically acceptable to key stakeholders, and fit the organization's philosophy and core values. Second, a strategy should be ethical, moral, and legal, and it should further the organizational pursuit of the common good. A strategy must address the strategic issue it was supposed to address. Strategies, as well, should meet the standards for goals and objectives listed above (e. g., specific, measurable).

The action/task plan then allocates people and resources to completing the tasks required for each strategy to be successful. Action plans should address the following questions: "What work is to be completed (actions steps), who is responsible for getting the work completed, how will the work be completed (operational details if necessary), when will the work be completed, what resources are needed, and how will success be measured." Also, vital budget and resource considerations should be integrated into the overall strategic plan to ensure all planned actions are feasible.

Strategies with defined action/task plans are the outlined means to which an agency plans to achieve its goals and objectives and to a greater extent, the agency's mission and vision of success. Strategies with defined action/task plans incorporate all the information a department learns about its agency through its different levels of analysis to be able to maximize the department's core competencies, internal strengths, and external opportunities and minimize the department's internal weakness and external threats.

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators with defined targets are meant to serve as a guideline to measure the success of agency strategies. Thus one of the major stumbling blocks to measuring an organization's strengths and weaknesses is the lack of performance indicators and performance analysis capable of detecting and presenting problems both for the organization and its stakeholders. As noted in *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, without performance criteria and information, it is difficult for an organization to evaluate

the relative effectiveness of alternative strategies, resource allocations, organizational designs, and distribution of power.

Checklist for an Effective Strategic Plan

The following checklist could be helpful in ensuring a useful strategic plan:

- Does the organization's strategic plan have a defined set of priorities that allows for the strategic plan to be adjusted according to changing needs and resources?
- Does the organization's strategic plan include goals that are not only achievable but also measurable and time-sensitive?
- Is the organization's strategic plan flexible and responsive enough to be able to adapt to unforeseen detours such as unexpected crisis, new opportunities, or changes in available resources?
- Does the organization's strategic plan focus on the most important things the agency is trying to accomplish by being simple and concise, yet thorough?
- Is everything in the organization's strategic plan not only capable of being accomplished but also needed to be accomplished?
- Does the organization's strategic plan outline a clear process to reach the agency's intended goals and does not just contain goals with no means to achieve them?
- Does the organization's strategic plan stay in the present by being reviewed and updated yearly, but still covers a longer time frame?
- Does the organization's strategic plan have a short-term, mid-range, and long-term outlook with corresponding goals for each?

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Appendix D: Reports Produced by the Department of Education's Office of Educational Accountability

According to the Office of Educational Accountability, it has completed the following program assessments:

- Public School Dropouts – 2002;
- Education of Deaf, Blind and Hearing and Visually Impaired Students – 2002;
- An Administrative Cost Study - Mississippi's Public School Districts – 2001;
- Mississippi Special Education Program – 2000;
- Parents and Other Clients/Customers - Concerns and Complaints – 1999;
- Tech Prep, Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Education Act – 1999;
- Mississippi Adequate Education Program – 1998;
- Mississippi Textbook Program – 1998;
- School Executive Management Institute (SEMI) – 1998;
- Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act of 1998 – 1998;
- Child Nutrition Program (Purchasing and Food Distribution) 1998;
- Mississippi Tech-Prep Program – 1998;
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I-Helping Disadvantaged Students Meet High Standards – 1997;
- Education of Homeless Children and Youth, The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act – 1997;
- Support Our Students, After School Mentoring Program – 1997;
- Educable Child – 1997;
- Education Technology Enhancement – 1997;
- Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage – 1997;
- Educational Enhancement Fund – 1996;
- Mississippi Math and Science School – 1996;
- Mississippi Teacher Center – 1996;
- Alternative Education – 1996;
- Assistant Teacher Program – 1995.

SOURCE: MDE Office of Educational Accountability.

Appendix E: MDE's Outcome Measures

Strategy 1: Implement ongoing, comprehensive reform in the areas of instruction, curriculum, assessment design and accountability stystems for all grade levels, from early education through graduation.		
		Outcome Measures:
	1	All children will demonstrate appropriate readiness skills upon exiting Kindergarten.
	2	**All students will exit 3rd grade at or above appropriate reading level.**
	3	All language arts and writing scores in fourth through eighth grades will increase and students will perform proficiently in language and related coursework in ninth through the twelfth grades.
	4	**All Mississippi students will demonstrate a growing proficiency in reading and will meet the national average in reading within the next decade.**
	5	All children will exit kindergarten with appropriate mathematics readiness skills.
	6	All first through third grade students will demonstrate a growing proficiency in mathematics, in order to exit third grade with a basic foundation for the application of mathematics.
	7	All third through eighth grade mathematics assessment scores will show increased student achievement.
	8	All students will successfully complete a challenging K-12 Mathematics Curriculum that includes mastery of the content standards included in Algebra.
	9	Implement a comprehensive assessment system to increase student achievement.
	10	Implement an accountability system to hold local school districts and individual schools accountable for student achievement and process standards.
	11	Implement a comprehensive school improvement system that addresses individual weaknesses at each school to accelerate student achievement.
	12	All students will develop a growing proficiency in understanding the importance of achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
Strategy 2: Increase the quantity and quality of teachers.		
	1	Build a pipeline to channel prospective teachers from diverse backgrounds into Mississippi classrooms.
	2	Establish a Mississippi Network of Future Educators Association clubs (FEA) to provide middle and high school students with opportunities to explore teaching as a career option (Pre-Collegiate Recruitment).
	3	Encourage college students to pursue a degree and teach in Mississippi classrooms.
	4	Increase awareness of Mississippi teaching opportunities and the incentive at selected out-of-state Teacher Recruitment Fairs with a special emphasis on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
	5	Investigate opportunities to increase the pool of highly qualified teachers (Foreign Recruitments).
	6	Promote and enhance the Teaching Profession (Recruitment, Retention, and Enhancement).
	7	All teachers will be qualified to use technology for instruction by meeting the Mississippi Technology Standards for Teachers.
	8	All students will be taught by highly qualified and competent teachers.
Strategy 3: Increase the quantity and quality of administrators.		
	1	Teachers, administrators, and board members within a school and district will work as a team to lead school improvement that will have a positive impact on student learning and performance.
	2	School leaders will demonstrate the knowledge and skills to use relevant school data to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
	3	School leaders will establish and maintain a safe and orderly school climate conducive to teaching and learning.
	4	There will be an adequate pool of highly qualified administrators to lead Mississippi schools.
	5	All administrators will be qualified to use technology appropriately to improve their efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.
Strategy 4: Create a culture in Mississippi that understands the value of education.		
	1	Encourage relationships among schools, families, businesses and communities that are essential to the academic success of all students.
	2	Coordinate efforts to engage and promote family, business and community involvement with schools.
	3	Offer technical assistance to local schools and school districts to increase family, business and community involvement and partnerships.
	4	All districts will increase the involvement of parents, business/industry and community members in education through the use of technology.
	5	All students will attend school regularly.
	6	Develop a Speakers Bureau comprised of members well versed on K-12 education and their own areas of expertise from the Mississippi Department of Education Executive Leadership, Public Relations Office, State Superintendent's Representative, and personnel representing strategic initiatives of the Department to speak to various groups and organizations across the state.
Strategy 5: Redesign education for the 21st century workforce in Mississippi.		
	1	All students will meet or exceed the state standards for student literacy in technology by 2008.
	2	All students and educators will have equitable access to high quality educational content and resources.
	3	**The dropout rate for grades 9-12 will be reduced to 13% by 2012-2013.**
	4	The truancy rate for grades 9-12 will be reduced by 50 percent by 2012-2013.
	5	The graduation rate for each four-year high school cohort will increase to 85 percent by 2018-2019.
	6	The academic integration for grades 7-9 will be included in the redesign for the 21st Century workforce plan to help prepare students for IC3 Computer Literacy certification which will transfer to college, and meet the computer literacy requirement for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
	7	The Instructional Components in the redesign for the 21st Century workforce for grades 7-9 will help prepare students for IC3 computer Literacy certification, which will transfer to college, and meet the computer literacy requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
	8	The Integration of Workforce Education in high school will help prepare students for a global economy and future study in the postsecondary academic and vocational arena.

SOURCE: MDE

Appendix F: Reports Produced by the Department of Education's Office of Research and Statistics

- State Accountability (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-17-6 [4])--produce accurate, valid, and reliable state accountability results by September;
- Federal Accountability (required by Public Law 107-110 Page 1445)--produce accurate, valid, and reliable federal accountability results by September;
- High Quality Teacher Reports (required by Public Law 107-110 Page 1634)--produce accurate, valid, and reliable high quality teacher data by December;
- Title III Accountability (required by Public Law 107-110 Page 1702)--produce accurate, valid, and reliable Title III accountability results by October;
- Closing the Gaps school listing (required by Public Law 107-110 Page 1500)--produce accurate, valid, and reliable school listing by October;
- Blue Ribbon Schools school listing (required by Public Law 107-110, Part D, Fund for the Improvement of Education, Subpart 1, Sec. 5411 [b] [5])--produce accurate, valid, and reliable school listing by November;
- Student Testing Rosters to Testing Vendors (required by Public Law 107-110 Page 1449 and MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-17-6 [4] [h]);
- Student Testing Results Files from Testing Vendors (required by Public Law 107-110 Page 1449 and MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-17-6 [4] [h])--ensure accurate test results are included in both the state and federal accountability models as well as accurately reported publicly;
- Superintendent's Annual Report (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-3-11 [k])--produce accurate, valid, and reliable report by January;
- MS Report Card (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-3-53)--produce accurate, valid, and reliable report by January;
- Children First Report Card (required by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-17-6 [9] [a])--produce accurate, valid, and reliable report by January;
- EDEN/CSPR Reporting--each file has a unique due date established by the U. S. Department of Education;
- Graduation Rates--produce accurate, valid, and reliable report by January; and,
- Special Education APR/SPP assessment data--Table 2 data due in October and Table 6 data due in February.

SOURCE: MDE Office of Research and Statistics.

Appendix G: Performance Indicators Required by Perkins IV

Secondary Level Performance Indicators and Measurement Definitions	Post-secondary Level Performance Indicators and Measurement Definitions
• **Academic attainment in reading/language arts**: percentage of concentrators who met the proficient or advanced level of the statewide high school reading/language arts assessment and who, in the reporting year, left secondary education • **Academic attainment in math**: percentage of concentrators who met the proficient or advanced level of the statewide high school mathematics assessment and who, in the reporting year, left secondary education • **Technical skill attainment**: percentage of concentrators who passed technical skills assessments that are aligned with industry-recognized standards, if available • **School completion and student graduation rates**: percentage of concentrators who completed both years of a two-year program reported as graduated • **Placement**: percentage of students who completed two-year programs and were placed in military, advanced education, or employment • **Nontraditional participation**: percentage of participants from programs in nontraditional fields who were in an underrepresented gender group that participated in a program that leads to employment in nontraditional field • **Nontraditional completion**: percentage of participants from programs in nontraditional fields who completed a program that leads to employment in a nontraditional field	• **Technical skill attainment**: Percentage of concentrators who passed technical skills assessments that are aligned with industry-recognized standards, if available • **Credential, certificate, or degree**: percentage of CTE concentrators who received an industry-recognized credential, a certificate, or degree • **Student retention or transfer**: percentage of CTE concentrators not earning a degree who remained in postsecondary institution • **Student placement**: percentage of concentrators leaving postsecondary education who were placed or retained in employment or placed in military service or apprenticeship programs in the second quarter following the program year in which they left • **Nontraditional participation**: percentage of participants from programs in nontraditional fields who were in an underrepresented gender group that participated in a program that leads to employment in nontraditional field • **Nontraditional completion**: percentage of participants from programs in nontraditional fields who completed a program that leads to employment in a nontraditional field

NOTE: CTE=Career and Technical Education.

SOURCE: MDE's Office of Vocational Education.

Appendix H: Goals of the High School Redesign Program

- To provide a state-of-the-art standards-based, research-based Information and Communication Technology curriculum and assessment framework for Mississippi middle school students that will offer students an opportunity to become technology literate, obtain 21st century skills and enhance academic skills.
- To provide a high-tech career development program with a strong emphasis in applied learning in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics that will not only give students the tools necessary to be successful in high school, but also prepare students for future study beyond high school.
- To reduce Mississippi's dropout rate by providing students with alternative school hours, the option of completing career and academic courses online, rigorous academic and career curricula, a personalized learning environment, a relevant connection between school and work, more options of study and dual college credit.
- To prepare Mississippi high school graduates academically as well as equip them with learning and thinking skills, global awareness, information and communications technology literacy, leadership skills and life skills.
- To provide Mississippi educators with high quality, standards-based professional learning opportunities that will prepare instructors to implement new curricula and increase student achievement, course placement and completion.
- To provide extended funding to Mississippi school districts that will support an effective learning environment for all Mississippi students.
- To increase articulated and dual-credit courses from community college to the university level in order to assist students in the transition from one level of education to another and in reducing the expense as students seek higher levels of education to meet increasing demands in the workplace.

SOURCE: http://redesign.rcu.msstate.edu.

Appendix I: Basic Components of the Mississippi Reading Reform Model

- well-designed early literacy interventions to ensure reading readiness;
- prescriptive direct instruction utilizing the essential elements of reading instruction and based on the results of valid and reliable assessments;
- extended instructional opportunities for children; and,
- high quality professional development to improve reading instructional practices of Mississippi teachers, administrators, and support staff.

SOURCE: MDE.

Appendix J: Principles of Performance-Based Contracting

According to the U. S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), performance-based contracts clearly spell out the desired end result expected of the contractor, while the manner in which the work is to be performed is left up to the contractor. This method gives the contractors as much freedom as possible in figuring out how best to meet the performance objective. Traditionally, government service contracts tend to emphasize inputs rather than outcomes due to very detailed and prescriptive process requirements resulting from state or federal legislation. For example, contracts typically have detailed the procedures and processes to be used in delivering a service rather than the outcome desired from such service. One primary advantage in utilizing performance-based contracts is that the contractors are encouraged to be innovative and find more cost-effective ways of delivering services to obtain the desired results. In addition, shifting the contractual focus from the process or tasks to the overall results has the potential to encourage obtaining more positive outcomes.

In September 2002, the GAO issued a report entitled *Guidance Needed for Using Performance-Based Service Contracting*. The purpose of this report was to evaluate whether service contracts characterized by agencies as performance-based contain basic performance-based attributes. These attributes include descriptions of what outcomes the agency is looking for rather than descriptions of how services should be performed; measurable performance standards; quality assurance plans that describe how the contractor's performance will be evaluated; and positive and negative incentives, when appropriate. This report utilized key elements identified by the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) as the minimum that a contract must include in order to be classified as performance-based. The following section briefly describes the key elements that can be applied to any performance-based contract.

The first key element of a performance-based contract is that it must describe the requirements in terms of results required rather than the methods of performance of the work. Agencies should structure the purpose and performance work statements in contracts around what is to be performed rather than how to perform it. The contract should also include performance requirements that define the work in measurable, mission/objective-related terms.

The second key element of a performance-based contract is that it includes measurable performance standards. The standards should be established in terms of quality, timeliness, and any other applicable requirements or desired outcomes. An agency should ensure that each standard is necessary, carefully chosen, and not impede the contractor's ability to achieve the desired result. If these factors are not taken into consideration, the result could be unnecessarily increased contract costs to both the contractor and the agency. Agencies should also consider that the standards are not set so high that they could drive up the cost of service or so low that they may act as a disincentive to good contract performance.

The third key element focuses on how the contractor's performance will be evaluated through a formal quality assurance plan. A good quality assurance plan should include a surveillance schedule and clearly state the surveillance methods that will be utilized. The plan should focus on the quality, quantity, and timeliness of the overall performance to be delivered by the contractor and not on the steps required or methods used to produce the service.

The fourth key element focuses on utilizing incentives, both positive and negative if applicable, to the desired outcome or service to be achieved. An agency should use incentives when they will induce better quality performance. These incentives should apply to the most important aspects of the work, rather than every individual task implemented to achieve the desired outcome.

Additional best practices and elements of performance-based contracting include utilizing commercial and/or industry-wide performance standards, when they are available. An agency should also take into consideration prior contracting experience and lessons learned from predecessor acquisitions in order to improve the contracting process and identify future best practices.

While performance-based contracting methods may result in achieving the desired outcomes and results, there are several barriers in being able to implement a performance-based contract that contains all of the minimum required key elements. Barriers include very detailed and prescriptive contract requirements in regard to the tasks necessary to implement the service or achieve the desired result, the presence of overly strong oversight requirements typically established through state or federal legislation, and whether the desired outcome could potentially create a safety, cost, or technical risk to the entities involved.

SOURCE: U. S. Office of Management and Budget and U. S. Governmental Accountability Office.

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September 13, 2010

Dr. Max K. Arinder
Executive Director
Joint Committee on Performance
Evaluation and Expenditure Review
P.O. Box 1204
Jackson, MS 3915

Dear Dr. Arinder:

On behalf of the Mississippi Board of Education, I would like to thank you and your staff for your report entitled "Opportunities for Improving the Accountability of the Mississippi Department of Education". We appreciate your thorough review of the complex environment of the Mississippi Department of Education. We found your report to be both insightful and thought provoking.

As you noted in your report, the board's ability to hold the department accountable for achieving this goal is affected by numerous factors including federal and state mandates and continuous changes in educational standards and programs. We appreciate your recognition of the enormous complexity of working with 152 diverse school districts and meeting the enormity of federal requirements which creates a unique challenge for the department.

The Mississippi Board of Education has established a bold vision for the Mississippi Department of Education. It is our goal to dramatically improve the quality of K-12 education in our state. We intend to utilize your report as a tool to improve our governance of the department. We will study the concepts you outlined concerning

performance management, strategic planning, performance-based contracting, and data systems and research. Implementing many of your recommendations will take time. We appreciate your constructive critique and will use your findings as a guide as we move forward toward our mission to educate the children of Mississippi.

Thank you again for your diligent work on this report. We will update you as we work to implement measures to improve accountability at the Mississippi Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Charles McClelland
Chairman

cc: Mississippi Board of Education Members
Dr. Tom Burnham, Superintendent of Education

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