



Strategic Plan

Marion County Schools

2026-2031



2026-2031 STRATEGIC PLAN

FROM PROMISE TO POTENTIAL



JAMIE PENONCELLO, SUPERINTENDENT

Leon Williams, Sr., Board Chair

Lehanne Singleton, Board Vice-Chair

Debra Graham, Board Member

Brandon Grier, Board Member

Bill Addison, Board Member

INTRODUCTION

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Marion County Families, Staff, and Community,

It is my honor to share the Marion County Schools' 2026-2031 Strategic Plan--a roadmap shaped by reflection, data, and a deep belief in the potential of our students and our community.

This plan represents more than goals and initiatives. It represents a promise.

A promise that every student will be known, supported, challenged, and prepared. A promise that our schools will continue to grow stronger, safer, and more responsive. A promise that Marion County Schools will prepare graduates not just to leave us--but to lead, serve and succeed wherever life takes them.

Over the next few years, our district will expand college, career, and military pathways, strengthen athletics and activities, invest deeply in teaching and leadership, and ensure our schools are safe, welcoming, and equipped for learning. We will measure progress, communicate openly, and hold ourselves accountable to the community we serve.

This strategic plan was built with one central question in mind:
"What does the future require of our students--and how must we grow to meet it?"

The answer calls us to innovation, partnership, and purpose.

We invite you to review this plan, share your voice, and walk alongside us in this work. Our success will not be determined by a document, but by the daily experiences of our students and the strength of the relationships that surround them.

Thank you for trusting Marion County Schools with what matters most.

Together, we will build strong schools, strong systems, and strong futures.

With gratitude and commitment,

Jamie Penoncello, Superintendent



FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

DEAR MARION COUNTY COMMUNITY,

On behalf of the Marion County Board of Education, we are proud to present the 2026-2031 Strategic Plan for Marion County Schools.

As elected representatives of this community, our responsibility is not only to govern, but to steward a vision for the future of our children. This strategic plan reflects that responsibility. It is grounded in community values, informed by data and experience, and focused on preparing every student for life beyond graduation.

Over the next five years, this plan will guide how resources are invested, how programs are developed, and how progress is measured. It prioritizes academic excellence, student engagement, leadership development, safety, transparency, and strong partnerships with families, businesses, and community organizations.

Most importantly, it centers on students. We believe every student in Marion County deserves access to meaningful opportunities, strong instruction, safe and supportive schools, and clear pathways to college, careers, or military service. This plan is our commitment to making that belief visible in action.

The Board of Education is dedicated to monitoring progress, communicating openly, and ensuring accountability throughout the life of this plan. We welcome community input and view this strategic direction as shared effort between schools and the community we serve.

Thank you for your continued trust, partnership, and support of Marion County Schools. Together, we look forward to building a future our students deserve.

Respectfully,

The Marion County Board of Education



Leon Williams, Sr.



Lehanne Singleton



Debra Graham



Brandon Grier



Bill Addison

PLAN FOUNDATIONS

MCSD'S VISION, MISSION, AND BELIEFS ARE THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH OUR STRATEGY IS BUILT.

Our vision specifies what we are building toward. It is our north star.

Our mission specifies what we do. It is our purpose.

Our beliefs specify what's behind our actions: the values that guide us as a collective toward our shared goals.

Taken together, these plan foundations communicate why we do what we do, what we exist to do, and our aspiration for exemplary services to students, their families and the community.

VISION:

To be #1 academically in the Chattahoochee-Flint RESA and rank among the top schools in Georgia.

MISSION:

To provide all students with a quality education in a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment.

WE BELIEVE:

that all students CAN learn.

*that **Engaged And Guided Learners Equal Success.***

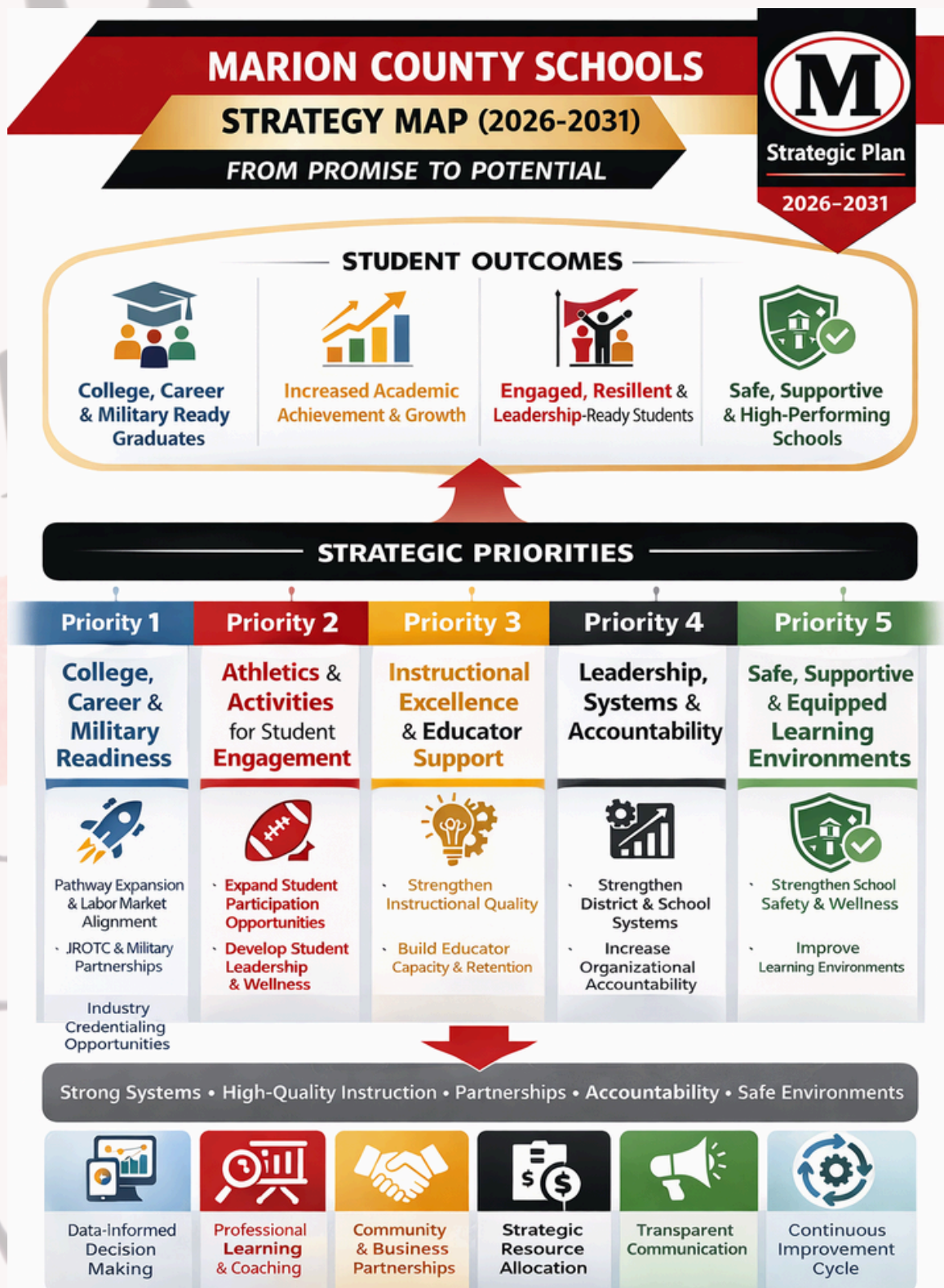
that teachers, administrators, parents and the community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.

that the commitment to continuous improvement is imperative for great schools.



STRATEGY MAP

The Marion County Schools Strategy Map illustrates how foundational systems, leadership, and safe environments enable instructional excellence and student engagement. These priorities collectively expand pathways, credentials, and readiness opportunities, resulting in graduates prepared for college, careers, and military service. All work is aligned to the district's vision and commitment to continuous improvement.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

COLLEGE, CAREER & MILITARY READINESS

MCSD will position every student for success after graduation by expanding access to rigorous academic, career, technical, and military preparation pathways.

PRIORITY #1 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increase graduation rate
- Increase percentage of students meeting College & Career Ready indicators
- Increase dual enrollment participation and completion
- Increase industry credentials and work-based learning participation
- Increase military enlistment and JROTC participation

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 1.1 – EXPAND CAREER, TECHNICAL & MILITARY PATHWAYS INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
PATHWAY EXPANSION & LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT	• <i>Conduct annual regional labor market analysis to identify high-demand, high-wage sectors.</i> • <i>Align existing pathways to verified workforce demand data.</i> • <i>Add or revise at least one high-demand pathway within the strategic plan cycle.</i> • <i>Convene business and industry advisory partners twice annually.</i> • <i>Monitor enrollment and completion trends to adjust offerings as needed.</i>	• <i>Annual labor market alignment report completed.</i> • <i>80% of pathways aligned to documented regional workforce demand.</i> • <i>15% increase in pathway enrollment over 3 years.</i> • <i>85% of graduates complete a career pathway.</i> • <i>At least 2 employer advisory meetings held annually.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

COLLEGE, CAREER & MILITARY READINESS

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 1.2 - IMPLEMENT JROTC & STRENGTHEN MILITARY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
JROTC & MILITARY PARTNERSHIP	• <i>Expand or strengthen JROTC programming and enrollment.</i> • <i>Formalize partnerships with military recruiters and representatives from multiple branches.</i> • <i>Host annual military career awareness events.</i> • <i>Increase student participation in ASVAB testing and military informational sessions.</i> • <i>Provide military pathway advisement within Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs).</i>	• <i>Implement JROTC program in some capacity.</i> • <i>Representation from at least 3 military branches annually.</i> • <i>Increase in ASVAB participation rates by 20%.</i> • <i>Increase in documented military enlistments year over year.</i> • <i>100% of students receive military career exposure opportunities.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

COLLEGE, CAREER & MILITARY READINESS

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MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 1.3 – INCREASE INDUSTRY CREDENTIALING OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
INDUSTRY CREDENTIALING OPPORTUNITIES	• <i>Expand access to industry-recognized credentials embedded within CTAE pathways.</i> • <i>Increase funding and support for credential exam fees.</i> • <i>Provide teacher professional learning aligned to credential requirements.</i> • <i>Partner with technical colleges to expand dual enrollment and certification options.</i> • <i>Track credential attainment by subgroup to ensure equitable access.</i>	• <i>10% annual increase in industry credential attainment.</i> • <i>At least 50% of pathway completers earn an industry-recognized credential.</i> • <i>Increase dual enrollment participation by 3% annually.</i> • <i>Reduction in subgroup gaps in credential attainment by 10% over 3 years.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

COLLEGE, CAREER & MILITARY READINESS

MCSD will position every student for success after graduation by expanding access to rigorous academic, career, technical, and military preparation pathways.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 1.4 - INCREASE CAREER EXPLORATION IN GRADES K-12 INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
CAREER EXPLORATION IN GRADES K-12	• <i>Implement structured career exploration activities beginning in elementary school.</i> • <i>Conduct annual interest inventories in grades 6–12.</i> • <i>Integrate career awareness lessons into core content areas.</i> • <i>Host career days, industry guest speakers, and college/military visits annually.</i> • <i>Ensure all students maintain an updated Individual Graduation Plan (IGP).</i>	• <i>100% of students complete annual career interest inventories (6–12).</i> • <i>Career exploration activities implemented at all schools annually.</i> • <i>100% of students update IGP's each year (and share with parents).</i> • <i>Increase in pathway enrollment connected to identified student interests.</i> • <i>Improved student survey results related to career awareness and preparedness.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

ATHLETICS & ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

MCSD will strengthen athletics, fine arts, and extracurricular programs as critical pathways to leadership development, student wellness, and school pride.

PRIORITY #2 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increased extracurricular participation
- Improved attendance
- Reduced discipline referrals
- Increased student engagement survey results

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 2.1 – EXPAND STUDENT PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
STUDENT PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES	• <i>Conduct an annual participation audit to identify gaps in athletics, clubs, fine arts, and extracurricular offerings.</i> • <i>Expand access to middle school and elementary feeder programs.</i> • <i>Reduce participation barriers (transportation, fees, scheduling conflicts).</i> • <i>Increase promotion and visibility of activities through school communication platforms.</i>	• <i>10% increase in overall student participation in athletics and extracurricular activities within 3 years.</i> • <i>Participation opportunities available at every school level (elementary, middle, high).</i> • <i>Increase in participation among underrepresented student groups by 10%.</i> • <i>Participation audit and Needs Assessment guiding any revision to offerings based upon findings.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

ATHLETICS & ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

MCSD will strengthen athletics, fine arts, and extracurricular programs as critical pathways to leadership development, student wellness, and school pride.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 2.2- INCREASE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND WELLNESS INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND WELLNESS	- Expand leadership development opportunities through student government, team captain training, peer mentoring, and service-learning programs. - Integrate character education and leadership competencies into athletics and activities programming. - Provide wellness education focused on mental health, physical fitness, and resilience. - Partner with community organizations to support student wellness initiatives. - Provide professional learning for coaches and sponsors on student leadership development and social-emotional support.	- Increase student participation in leadership roles by 10% over 3 years. - Annual student climate survey reflects improvement in belonging and school connectedness. - Reduction in discipline referrals among students participating in athletics/activities. - Improved attendance rates for students engaged in extracurricular programs. - Implementation of at least one wellness-focused initiative annually at each school.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & EDUCATOR SUPPORT

MCSD will ensure every student receives high-quality instruction by investing in professional growth, instructional coaching, and educator recruitment and retention.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Student growth and achievement
- Teacher retention rates
- Instructional observation data
- Professional learning participation

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 3.1 – STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY	• <i>Establish and communicate clear district-wide instructional expectations aligned to state standards.</i> • <i>Implement consistent instructional walkthroughs and feedback cycles.</i> • <i>Provide targeted professional learning aligned to student performance data.</i> • <i>Expand the use of formative assessment and data-driven instructional planning.</i> • <i>Support collaborative planning through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).</i> • <i>Align curriculum, assessment, and instructional resources across schools.</i>	• <i>100% of schools implement consistent walkthrough and feedback processes.</i> • <i>Increase in teacher effectiveness ratings over the strategic plan cycle.</i> • <i>Demonstrated student growth on state and local assessments.</i> • <i>Quarterly PLC meetings documented at each school.</i> • <i>Reduction in achievement gaps among student subgroups by 10% over 3 years.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & EDUCATOR SUPPORT

MCSD will ensure every student receives high-quality instruction by investing in professional growth, instructional coaching, and educator recruitment and retention.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 3.2 – BUILD EDUCATOR CAPACITY & RETENTION INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
BUILD EDUCATOR CAPACITY & RETENTION	• <i>Develop a structured mentoring and induction program for new teachers.</i> • <i>Expand leadership pathways for teachers (instructional leads, department chairs, mentors).</i> • <i>Provide ongoing professional learning aligned to district priorities and career pathways.</i> • <i>Conduct annual climate and satisfaction surveys for educators.</i> • <i>Implement retention strategies including recognition programs and career advancement opportunities.</i> • <i>Strengthen recruitment efforts targeting high-need certification areas.</i>	• <i>Improve teacher retention rate by 10% over 3 years.</i> • <i>100% of new teachers participate in mentoring programs.</i> • <i>Increase in internal promotion to leadership roles.</i> • <i>Annual educator survey reflects improved job satisfaction and support.</i> • <i>Reduction in vacancies in high-need areas year over year.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

LEADERSHIP, SYSTEMS & ACCOUNTABILITY

MCSD will promote transparency, continuous improvement, and shared ownership through strong leadership systems and data-informed decision-making.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Strategic goal progress monitoring
- School improvement outcomes
- Stakeholder trust and engagement

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 4.1 – STRENGTHEN DISTRICT & SCHOOL SYSTEMS INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
STRENGTHEN DISTRICT & SCHOOL SYSTEMS	• <i>Conduct a systems audit to evaluate district processes (curriculum alignment, budgeting, communication, HR, data use).</i> • <i>Clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making protocols across departments and schools.</i> • <i>Standardize key district processes (planning, reporting, purchasing, hiring, evaluation).</i> • <i>Implement a district-wide data dashboard for real-time monitoring of key performance indicators.</i> • <i>Provide leadership development for principals and district administrators.</i>	• <i>100% of schools utilizing standardized planning and reporting templates.</i> • <i>District data dashboard operational and reviewed quarterly.</i> • <i>Improved principal and leader effectiveness ratings.</i> • <i>Annual stakeholder survey reflects improved clarity and communication.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

LEADERSHIP, SYSTEMS & ACCOUNTABILITY

MCSD will promote transparency, continuous improvement, and shared ownership through strong leadership systems and data-informed decision-making.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 4.2 - INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY	• Establish clear annual performance targets aligned to the strategic plan. • Develop school-level improvement plans aligned to district priorities. • Monitor progress quarterly through data reviews and leadership meetings. • Publicly report key performance indicators annually. • Provide targeted support and intervention for schools not meeting benchmarks. • Align administrator evaluations to strategic plan outcomes.	• 100% of schools aligned to district strategic goals. • Quarterly progress monitoring documented. • Year-over-year improvement in district accountability ratings (state metrics). • Reduction in underperforming performance indicators by 10% over 3 years. • Annual public reporting of strategic plan progress.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5

SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND EQUIPPED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

MCSD will maintain safe, welcoming, and well-equipped campuses where physical safety, mental wellness, and belonging are foundational to learning.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Student and staff climate surveys
- Discipline and attendance trends
- Safety compliance
- Facility condition scores
- Financial Audits and Federal Monitoring Compliance

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 5.1 – STRENGTHEN SCHOOL SAFETY & WELLNESS INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
STRENGTHEN SCHOOL SAFETY & WELLNESS	• <i>Conduct annual comprehensive school safety audits in collaboration with local law enforcement and emergency services.</i> • <i>Review and update district emergency response plans annually.</i> • <i>Implement regular safety drills aligned to state requirements.</i> • <i>Expand access to school-based mental health and counseling supports.</i> • <i>Provide annual training for staff on safety protocols, crisis response, and student wellness.</i> • <i>Strengthen threat assessment and behavioral intervention processes.</i> • <i>Promote positive school climate initiatives that support belonging and connectedness.</i>	• <i>100% of schools complete annual safety audits and emergency plan updates.</i> • <i>100% compliance with required safety drills.</i> • <i>Increase student survey results related to feeling safe at school.</i> • <i>Reduction in discipline incidents by 10% over 3 years.</i> • <i>Increased utilization of student support services.</i> • <i>Completion of annual staff safety and wellness training.</i>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5

SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND EQUIPPED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

MCSD will maintain safe, welcoming, and well-equipped campuses where physical safety, mental wellness, and belonging are foundational to learning.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE 5.2 – IMPROVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	ACTION STEP	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
IMPROVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS	• <i>Conduct annual facilities assessments to identify maintenance and capital improvement needs.</i> • <i>Develop a multi-year facilities improvement plan aligned to enrollment and program growth.</i> • <i>Upgrade classroom technology and instructional resources.</i> • <i>Improve preventive maintenance scheduling and response times.</i> • <i>Ensure equitable access to instructional materials and equipment across schools.</i> • <i>Enhance cleanliness, lighting, and overall physical learning conditions.</i>	• <i>Completion of annual facilities assessment and updated improvement plan.</i> • <i>Reduction in maintenance work order response time.</i> • <i>Increase in classroom technology access ratios (device-to-student).</i> • <i>Improved stakeholder satisfaction ratings related to facilities and learning conditions.</i> • <i>Completion of identified capital improvement projects within established timelines.</i>



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Year 1

In Year 1, the district wide focus will be to establish baseline data across all priorities; conduct audits (safety, facilities, systems, pathways, participation); develop district dashboard; align school improvement plans to strategic priorities. The major deliverables will be labor market alignment study completed; participation and climate surveys administered; instructional expectations clarified; mentoring program for new teachers implemented; systems audit completed; and safety and facilities assessments completed. Year 1's outcome target will be 100% of schools aligned to strategic plan and baseline metrics publicly reported.

Year 2

In Year 2, the district wide focus will be to strengthen systems and supports; begin targeted expansions; and develop leadership capacity. The major deliverables will be data dashboard fully operational; expanded credential offerings; JROTC/military partnerships strengthened; student leadership programming expanded; leadership development for principals; and multi-year facilities improvement plan adopted. Year 2's outcome target will be 5% increase in pathway enrollment; 5% increase in extracurricular participation; and improvement in educator satisfaction survey results.



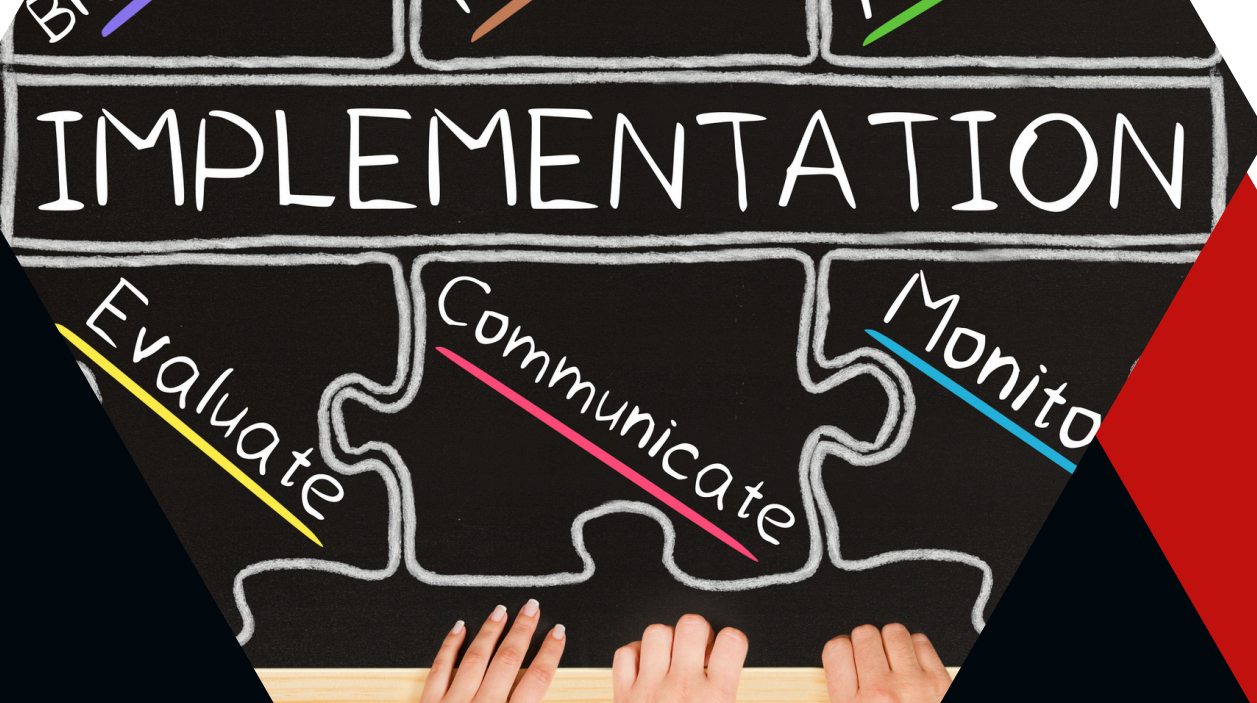
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN CONTINTUED

Year 3

In Year 3, the district wide focus will be to expand successful programs; address subgroup gaps; and scale high-impact strategies. The major deliverables will be new or revised high-demand pathway launched; work-based learning participation increased; increased industry credential attainment; expanded wellness and safety supports; and refined accountability monitoring process. Year 3's outcome target will be 10% increase in credential attainment; 5% reduction in achievement gaps; improved retention rate trends; and reduction in discipline incidents.

Year 4

In Year 4, the district wide focus will be to optimize underperforming areas; strengthen accountability measures; and increase measurable outcomes. The major deliverables will be comprehensive pathway review and adjustments; advanced instructional coaching implementation; continued facilities improvements; and expanded student leadership and engagement metrics. Year 4's outcome target will be 80%+ pathway alignment to workforce demand; 15% growth in extracurricular participation; 8-10% improvement in teacher retention; and continued upward trend in state accountability indicators.



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN CONCLUDED

Year 5

In Year 5, the district wide focus will be to demonstrate measurable impact; institutionalize systems; and prepare next strategic planning cycle. The major deliverables will be full five-year impact evaluation; updated strategic targets for next cycle; sustained partnership agreements; and completed capital improvement milestones. Year 5's outcome target will be 90% of graduates leave with CCR indicator; 15-20% increase in industry credential attainment (5-year growth); sustained improvement in accountability ratings; positive trend in climate, safety, and engagement data; and teacher retention improved by 5% over baseline.

A photograph of a blue building with a black roof and a sign that reads "MARION COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION". The building has several windows and a central entrance with a small porch. A white utility pole is in the foreground. The image is partially obscured by a large black and red graphic overlay.

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

MORE INFO ABOUT US!

Marion County Schools is where small-town pride meets big opportunity. Serving Pre-K through 12th grade, we prepare students for college, careers, and military service through strong academics, hands-on pathways, athletics, and the arts. In a supportive, close-knit community, every child is known, challenged, and inspired to soar.

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THANK YOU