

Milwaukee Public Schools Operational Review

*Findings and recommendations for improving Central Office operations
in service of academic excellence for all Milwaukee Public Schools students.*

February 2025

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Executive Summary

Overview

This report details an in-depth Operational Review of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), grounded in diagnostic analysis, stakeholder engagement, and benchmarking research. Through a focused root cause analysis, we identify critical challenges impacting the District's performance and offer actionable recommendations to address immediate concerns while laying the groundwork for sustainable, long-term improvements. These recommendations align with a forward-looking vision that empowers MPS to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen outcomes, and drive meaningful progress for students.

To evaluate the effectiveness of MPS' operational landscape, the MGT team evaluated various sources of information, combining insights from desk research, past projects, and stakeholder interviews to develop recommendations for effective district operations. Here are the key components of the MGT MPS Organizational Review¹:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Conducted extensive stakeholder interviews across MPS internal departments, the MPS Board, and the Department of Public Instruction and gathered key insights on operations and communication.
2. **Diagnostic Analysis of MPS Provided Materials:** Thoroughly examined the operations materials provided by MPS, identifying gaps, strengths, and areas for improvement in the current processes—cross-referenced findings with best practices identified during desk research to highlight discrepancies and opportunities for enhancement.
3. **Desk Research on Best Practices for District Organization:** Reviewed district operations, organization, strategic priorities, and communications for peer districts (i.e. Indianapolis, Baltimore, Cleveland, Philadelphia).
4. **Compiled Key Learnings from Past Projects:** Aggregated insights from MGT's previous work and expertise involving district operations, documenting successful strategies and approaches that could be adapted or replicated in MPS.

By evaluating various sources, MGT was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting Milwaukee Public Schools. The Operational Review identified critical issues stemming from leadership and staff turnover, fragmented planning, outdated systems, and unproductive reporting protocols, which have led to siloed operations and inefficient practices. These challenges, compounded by a culture resistant to change, strained governance relationships, and inconsistent data practices, undermine the District's ability to function effectively and achieve its goals.

¹ For detailed overview of the Organizational Review, see the [Appendix](#)

Context

Milwaukee Public Schools has faced ongoing challenges in consistently delivering high-quality education to its high-needs student population, with systemic issues compounding over decades. Proficiency rates sit at just 9% in math and 12% in reading, far below state and national averages, signaling a systemic failure to prioritize student outcomes².

The obstacles MPS faces can be attributed to both external and internal factors, as indicated below:

External Factors:

- **Geographic and demographic shifts** have resulted in stalled population growth and **significant enrollment declines** over the last six years (11.3%).
- **Competitive school-choice dynamics** have pulled students away from the district.
- National **teacher and staff shortages**, felt acutely in urban Milwaukee, have strained the District's capacity to provide consistent, high-quality instruction and support services to students.
- MPS students disproportionately experience economic challenges, with **over 80% of students classified as economically disadvantaged**.
- **Aging and outdated facilities** present challenges for maintaining healthy, safe, and adequately equipped learning environments for students.

Internal Factors:

- **Persistent leadership instability**, including a series of superintendents with short tenures and revolving cabinet-level leaders, have disrupted efforts to stabilize MPS.
- A longstanding **culture of fear and reluctance to change**, compounded by high turnover across the organization and recruitment challenges, have stalled or altogether prevented change-making efforts.
- **Ineffective reporting protocols and operational systems have** hindered accountability and performance across departments.
- Financial mismanagement, lack of honesty and transparency, and ineffective public communications have contributed to a **lack of public trust**.

Opportunity

Recognizing the urgent need for reform following intense public scrutiny around financial misreporting, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers and the Department of Administration (DOA)

² Proficiency data is based on student performance on Math and ELA state tests in SY2022-23

commissioned an independent Operational Review of MPS, conducted by MGT. This review analyzes the District's financial management, workflow, and organizational structures to uncover root causes and provide actionable solutions to restore stability and accountability. The motivation for this review is clear: MPS must make systemic changes to ensure that students—particularly the most vulnerable—are at the center of every decision. Ultimately, this work is in service of students, whose future success hinges on a district capable of delivering equitable, high-quality education.

With the incoming insights from this operational review and the financial and academic audits underway, MPS is uniquely positioned to adopt a fresh strategic direction. This opportunity encompasses strategic planning and implementation support, enabling the District to address long-standing challenges and drive meaningful progress.

- **Strategic Planning:** The District can reprioritize a focused set of initiatives with clear, measurable outcomes that align with the new insights and the incoming Superintendent's vision. The District can set a strong foundation for sustainable success by narrowing priorities and ensuring alignment.
- **Implementation Support:** Investing in external implementation support for high-impact areas of the organization will enhance the effectiveness of existing initiatives, optimize resource utilization, and expand the capacity of District personnel to meet evolving needs.

To catalyze academic excellence for all MPS students, the District should reframe its strategic priorities by incorporating the three overarching goals, nine associated objectives, and 29 specific recommendations laid out in this report. These recommendations aim to create a more coherent and effective system that prioritizes student success District-wide.

Goal 1: Create a Coherent Central System

MPS should prioritize the development of a coherent central system that leverages staff capacity for productivity and efficiency by focusing on key objectives that enhance organizational effectiveness and alignment.

Goal 2: Foster Meaningful Communication and Collaboration

MPS should prioritize fostering meaningful communication and collaboration across departments within the District by taking actions that will build trust, transparency, and collaboration.

Goal 3: Operate and Fund Strategically

MPS should prioritize operating and funding strategically by investing in strategies and systems that prepare the District for financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and long-term success.

Findings and Recommendations

The sections below provide detailed findings and recommendations for each strategic goal, outlining a clear path toward increasing opportunities for success for all MPS students.

Goal 1: Create a Coherent Central System

To orient the District's central system directly toward student success, MPS must prioritize key actions aligning structures, strategies, and resources. By focusing on the following three **objectives**, the District can enhance organizational effectiveness and foster greater alignment across departments:

1. **Restructure Central Office** to clarify roles, streamline decision-making, and improve alignment across departments.
2. **Invest in the Office of Human Resources** by enhancing leadership, building capacity, and providing external support to address immediate needs and sustain long-term growth.
3. **Make targeted shifts to the Strategic Plan** to focus on a select number of high-impact priorities with measurable outcomes to better align efforts with the District's overarching goals.

The following sections will dive deeper into the findings and recommendations for achieving these objectives.

Objective 1: Restructure Central Office

Findings

The unclear reporting lines and siloed departmental structure within MPS' Central Office significantly hinder the District's ability to drive student success. The complexity of the District's organizational chart creates barriers to efficiency and progress, which inhibits its ability to create the conditions for schools to thrive in meeting student needs.

Stakeholder interviews highlighted ambiguity in the roles and responsibilities of key entities such as the Office of Accountability and Efficiency (OAE), the Office of Board Governance (OBG), the MPS Board, and District leadership. This lack of clarity has led to overlapping responsibilities and fragmented workflows, limiting the District's ability to operate as a cohesive unit. For instance, the Legislative Policy Manager position has shifted between reporting to the Board and District multiple times, reflecting the blurred lines in MPS' organizational hierarchy. Additionally, communication roles housed in both the OBG and the District Office of Communications and School Performance contribute to misaligned messaging rather than a cohesive narrative.

Inconsistencies in role titles complicate procedures such as onboarding. At least one senior leader's title changed between the interview and contract signing process. Additionally, role

titles are not standardized across departments, creating uncertainty about precise responsibilities, roles, and authority.

Key positions have functionally shifted departments, and interviewees shared that reporting structures are confusing. For example, the Department of Technology Services has been relocated across at least four departments, resulting in a lack of strategic alignment and diminished effectiveness. Additionally, the Department of Equity, Access and Inclusion, Positive Behavior, Intervention and Supports and Restorative Practices (EAI - PBIS & RP) and the Department of Equity, Access, and Inclusion, Black and Latino Male Achievement and Gender Identity & Inclusion (EAI - BLMA & GII) currently fall under the Office of the Chief of Staff but are functionally run by the Chief of Academics. These Equity Departments are also examples of Board member-championed initiatives that have unclear, and likely overlapping, objectives.

Addressing these structural inefficiencies requires a streamlined organizational chart with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Additionally, hiring strategic-minded leaders to oversee District operations and reallocating existing talent to create cross-functional teams will help to break down departmental silos, enhance collaboration, and increase MPS' capacity to deliver excellent results for students.

Recommendations

A clear organizational structure is essential for providing employees with clarity on roles and responsibilities allowing for streamlined decision-making and operational efficiency.

1. **Clarify roles of independent offices** by developing guiding documents to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and collaboration structures of OAE, Office of Board Governance, MPS Board, and MPS Administration.
 - a. Actions may include items such as drafting team and department charters, updating job descriptions, and then communicating the clarified roles and responsibilities to internal staff as well as the public.
2. **Evaluate departmental structures** ensuring logical reporting lines vertically by function.
 - a. Potential revised offices could evolve to the following with significant adjustments to the departments that report to each office.
 - i. Office of the Superintendent
 - ii. Office of Operations
 - iii. Office of Talent & Human Resources
 - iv. Office of School Administration
 - v. Office of Academics & School Performance
 - vi. Office of Communications
 - vii. Office of Finance
 - b. Illustrative proposed MPS Organizational Chart and examples from other districts are included in Appendix II.
3. **Hire a Chief Communications Officer and Chief Operations Officer** with change management experience.

- a. The Chief Communications Officer should be able to develop and implement comprehensive public relations strategies and activities. They should have experience working proactively with the media and establishing influential and productive working relationships in a politically charged environment.
 - i. Either the Chief Communications Officer, or the Office of the Chief of Staff, should also update internal communication and collaboration mechanisms such as newsletters, meeting structures, and internal agenda and document management.
 - b. The Chief Operations Officer should offer leadership, guidance, and a clear vision to ensure the District adopts an effective and forward-thinking strategy for managing high-quality operations within a complex system with competing priorities.
4. **Create a cross-functional role or team** to be deployed on special projects. This role or team should leverage expertise across departments and ensure coherent execution.

Objective 2: Invest in the Office of Human Resources

Findings

Multiple findings indicate that the Office of Human Resources needs significant changes, including improvements to leadership efficacy and capacity, streamlined internal processes, and technological improvements. These changes will require external support to manage critical initiatives and drive swift change.

There is significant evidence that the Office of Human Resources has faced significant leadership challenges over time. The Office needs a Chief of Human Resources with demonstrated strategic leadership and change management skills, both of which will be necessary to lead the Department through critical improvements. Previous talent leaders were unable to articulate the evaluative procedures used by direct reports nor provided evidence of such procedures in any of the submitted and reviewed documentation. Additionally, historical encouragement of departmental directors to create initiatives without a structured evaluation of their effectiveness has resulted in numerous disparate priorities and a perceived lack of capacity across the team.

Staffing issues further compound the Office's difficulties. Persistent vacancies have impacted continuity of efforts, and there is a cohort of long-tenured veteran staff who are highly resistant to change. Together, this has continued to hinder the Office's evolution. Additionally, there is a lack of cross-training and inadequate documentation of standard operating procedures, both exacerbating existing knowledge gaps and disorganization when vacancies and turnovers occur.

Recognizing that important bargaining agreements and civil service protections can impact the hiring process due to regimented requirements, the Office's internal processes are nonetheless slow-moving and lack automation, leading to confusion and human error. For example, over 300 separate job description documents are manually updated, which is time-consuming and prone

to mistakes. The Office's primary technical system, PeopleSoft, is underutilized due to resistance to change and the resulting lack of investment in external support to make system modifications and train staff. Additionally, the systems used within the Office of Human Resources are not currently communicating with the systems used by other departments. This slows down processes between the Offices of Human Resources and Finance in particular.

Recommendations

To strengthen the effectiveness of the MPS Office of Human Resources, it is critical to focus on the following recommendations. These actions will position the Office for long-term success, cultivating a stronger, more resilient workforce in support of the District's mission.

1. **Conduct an external search to install new Human Resources leadership** with the capability and willingness to shepherd comprehensive changes on an ambitious timeline. The leader must navigate the important civil service and labor protections in MPS while ensuring hiring is timely, efficient, and produces strong candidates. Key associated actions include:
 - a. Invest resources in a thorough external search for the next Chief of Human Resources, focusing on appointing a leader with demonstrated expertise in change management to drive transformational improvements within the Office.
 - i. The Chief should be competent in leading the design and strategic implementation of high-quality recruitment and selection, staff onboarding, performance evaluation and professional development.
 - b. Evaluate the capability and capacity of departmental directors within the Office to guide their departments through the necessary changes.
 - c. Ensure that the leader has the capacity and experience to skillfully partner with labor unions to build a strong and productive relationship that values civil service protections while prioritizing timely and efficient hiring of qualified, mission-aligned candidates.
2. **Expand departmental capacity** by redesigning employee reporting processes, identifying high-leverage initiatives, and narrowing job scopes to transform culture and maximize employee contributions. The Office should:
 - a. Redesign employee reporting process and associated policies in collaboration with the Office of Accountability and Efficiency to improve organizational culture by preventing retaliation and eliminating elements of the reported "culture of fear."
 - b. Create a plan to upskill talent and identify high-leverage initiatives to drive departmental planning, intentionally deprioritizing others.
 - i. Collaborate with the Department of Technology Services to implement PeopleSoft upgrades and subsequently train Human Resources staff on those programmatic changes as well as other computing program efficiency tactics.
 - c. Review and narrow job scopes, housing them in a way such that they can be systemically updated, preferably within the PeopleSoft software system.

3. **Acquire external surge support** to address immediate challenges and provide the flexibility needed to sustain progress during high-demand periods. The external support provider should oversee high-priority strategic efforts beyond the Office's near-term capacity such as revamping the recruitment model and maximizing the technological systems. Additionally, the Office of Human Resources could greatly benefit from acquiring external surge support to oversee high-priority efforts such as:
 - a. Revamp Recruitment Model
 - i. Extend hiring windows and create a more robust, ongoing candidate pool for all MPS positions.
 - ii. Improve the consistency and speed of candidate communications through standardization and automation.
 - iii. Review current vetting, interview, and approval processes to eliminate redundancy and decrease hiring timelines.
 1. Evaluate board approval procedures to expedite hiring updates and processes as much as possible.
 2. Decrease the number of roles hired via panel interviews, and review and codify panel evaluation rubrics and screening criteria to ensure they do not result in the elimination of qualified candidates or the recommendation of unqualified candidates.
 - b. Maximize Technological Systems
 - i. Leverage external support to maximize utilization of PeopleSoft capabilities in departmental procedures.
 - ii. Program financial and HR systems to communicate seamlessly to expedite request-to-fill processes.
 - iii. Evaluate other manual processes that could be automated via PeopleSoft or other existing systems, such as tuition reimbursement.

Objective 3: Make Targeted Shifts to the Strategic Plan

Findings

A thoughtful and actionable strategic plan is needed to ensure long-term District success. The plan acts as a roadmap to guide decision-making, allocate resources efficiently, and shape organizational direction. By ensuring that the District is aligning efforts across all levels of the organization to work towards its shared vision and goals, student success can remain the central driver for change.

There is a need to strengthen specificity and accountability measures in MPS' current Five Priorities and the District's current Strategic Plan in order to ensure fidelity in implementation. Additionally, it is unclear if departmental goals tie directly to strategic priorities, as there are many disparate initiatives within the Plan that lack cohesion and strain capacity.

In addition, progress monitoring is not currently displayed in a way that is comprehensive, transparent, or representative of the progress being made in each strategic area. The Strategic

Initiatives include “special projects,” which are department-level initiatives rather than cross-functional goals. The activities and milestones for each initiative are currently subjective and vague, as are the Five Priorities of Success (i.e. “Students will complete rigorous coursework” and “Teachers will use rigorous K–12 instructional materials, engaging strategies, and a variety of resources to ensure that all students are achieving.”). In addition, findings indicated an absence of strategic initiatives targeting community engagement, finance, or operations improvements.

MPS lacks peer districts nearby against which it can benchmark, test ideas, and partner toward solutions. By leveraging learnings from districts facing similar challenges, MPS can capitalize on proven strategies for success and create an organizational vision that centers on improving student outcomes.

Recommendations

Having a strategic vision for the long-term success of MPS is paramount to catalyzing student success, and the community must be actively consulted throughout this process. To ensure the District reimagines its direction holistically and in partnership with all stakeholders, it is recommended that the District take the following actions:

1. **Evolve MPS’ Strategic Plan** by creating one cohesive document encapsulating cross-functional goals centered around student success. The new plan should replace MPS’ five priorities and current strategic initiatives and serve as the guiding vision for the District. When designing the plan, the District should³:
 - a. De-prioritize initiatives that are unaligned with strategic goals, such as special projects.
 - b. List each goal with an accompanying “why it matters” attached to each.
 - c. Ensure that milestones for each goal are digestible for the public and provide meaningful details of progress toward meeting the goal. The public-facing information should be visual, easily accessible, and concise.
2. **Explicitly link goals to student outcomes** by drawing from peer-district examples. MPS should also consider increasing partnerships with The Council of Great Schools or similar entities that convene cross-district leaders to provide benchmarking opportunities and collegial support from additional comparable districts.
3. **Create a District-wide implementation plan** to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration and track progress toward strategic priorities. In addition, develop systems and structures to ensure high-quality, efficient implementation. The implementation plan should:
 - a. Execute strategic pillars, goals, and objectives with fidelity and efficiency through deep analysis, rigorous prioritization, and robust stakeholder engagement.

³ For more details on Strategic Planning Benchmarking, see the [Appendix](#)

- b. Cohere district functions and build capacity to maximize opportunities for collaboration and sustain progress in the long-term
- 4. **Conduct a “Superintendent Listening Tour”** designed to help the newly installed superintendent better understand the District from the perspective of educators, scholars, families, and the community.
 - a. The Listening Tour should have the explicit goal of building trust between the MPS Administration and a diverse set of MPS stakeholders. Topics and questions should be informed by current District data and refine activities of the Strategic Plan.



Cost and Implementation Timeline

Goal 1: Create a Coherent Central System				
Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Priority	Low Budget Option	High Budget Option
Clarify roles of independent offices by developing guiding documents to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and collaboration structures of OAE, Office of Board Governance, MPS Board, and MPS Administration.	<u>Planning</u> : Spring 2025 <u>Execution</u> : Summer 2025 - Spring 2026	Medium	-	-
Conduct a "Superintendent Listening Tour" designed to help the newly installed superintendent better understand the District from the perspective of educators, scholars, families, and the community.	Summer 2025	Medium	-	<i>Cost included in Strategic Planning</i>
Hire a Chief Communications Officer and Chief of Operations with change-management experience.	Fall 2025	High	\$0	<u>Recruitment (one-time)</u> : \$116,000 (30% of first-year salary for two staff) <u>Salary (recurring)</u> : \$502,000
Create a cross-functional role or team to be deployed on special projects. This role or team should leverage expertise across departments and ensure coherent execution.	Fall 2025	Medium	\$0	<u>Cross-Functional Role</u> : \$214,500 annually <u>Cross-Functional Team</u> : Up to \$750,000 annually
Conduct an external search to install new Human Resources leadership with the capability and willingness to shepherd comprehensive changes on an ambitious timeline.	Fall 2025	High	\$0	\$58,000 (30% of first-year salary)
Evolve MPS' Strategic Plan by creating one cohesive document encapsulating cross-functional goals centered around student success. The new plan should replace MPS' Five Priorities and current strategic initiatives and serve as the guiding vision for the District.	Fall 2025	High	-	\$200,000
Explicitly link goals to student outcomes by drawing from peer-district examples. MPS should also consider increasing partnerships with The Council of Great Schools or similar entities that convene cross-district leaders to provide benchmarking opportunities and collegial support from additional comparable districts.	Fall 2025	Medium	-	<i>Cost included in Strategic Planning</i>
Evaluate departmental structures ensuring logical reporting lines vertically by function.	Fall 2025 - Spring 2026	High	-	\$75,000
Expand departmental capacity by redesigning employee reporting processes, identifying high-leverage initiatives, and narrowing job scopes to transform culture and maximize employee contributions.	Fall 2025 - Spring 2026	High	-	-
Create a District-wide implementation plan to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration and track progress toward strategic priorities. In addition, develop systems and structures to ensure high-quality, efficient implementation.	Fall 2025 - Fall 2026	Medium	\$0	\$250,000
Acquire external surge support to address immediate challenges and provide the flexibility needed to sustain progress during high-demand periods. The external support provider should oversee high-priority strategic efforts beyond the Office's near-term capacity such as revamping the recruitment model and maximizing the technological systems.	Fall 2026 - Fall 2027	Medium	\$0	\$150,000

Goal 2: Foster Meaningful Communication and Collaboration

To strengthen the impact and effectiveness of internal and external MPS communication, the District needs to focus on the following **objectives**:

1. **Improve collaboration between MPS Board of Directors and District Leadership**, aligning efforts to better serve the Milwaukee community and its stakeholders.
2. **Bolster leadership and operations within the Department of Communications and Marketing** by empowering departmental leadership to drive strategy with vision and expertise
3. **Enhance data management and utilization** to ensure transparent, accurate communication and foster data-driven decision-making

These priorities will drive meaningful improvements in the student experience across the District by improving consistency and transparency in communications and increasing public transparency. Below are details on each objective, including the key recommendations to support its achievement.

Objective 1: Improve Collaboration Between MPS Board of Directors and District Leadership

Findings

The strained relationship between the MPS Board and District Leadership is a critical barrier to achieving aligned and equitable decision-making. Without access to accurate and timely data tied directly to district goals, the Board often defaults to ad hoc decision-making based on anecdotal evidence rather than actionable insights.

This misalignment has led to Board initiatives that frequently diverge from district-wide priorities, creating inefficiencies and stalling progress. Additionally, the Administration is often pulled away from established goals to address Board-driven initiatives that are not backed by data, further fragmenting efforts to improve student outcomes.

Findings also revealed instances where the Board's role was described as overly involved in the District's day-to-day operations, such as participating in the hiring process of all staff roles rather than focusing on its core responsibilities of setting a high-level vision and holding the Administration accountable for student outcomes.

Improved collaboration and communication between the Board and District Leadership—grounded in reliable data, transparent reporting, and clearer lines of accountability and responsibilities—are essential for building trust, aligning priorities, and driving meaningful progress for the Milwaukee community.

Recommendations

Board and District Leadership must improve collaboration through structures that support coherent governance and accountability. Key actions include:

1. **Consolidate Board and MPS District communication offices** and align on priorities to ensure cohesive messaging across the District.
 - a. Recently implemented digital newsletters from Board members offer a strong example of customizable communication that can be targeted to specific audiences and offer relevant updates but can be managed and distributed through the District’s Office of Communication and Marketing operations.
 - b. Outgoing, proactive communications can be packaged as being from the district overall rather than from either the Board or the Administration, bolstering public perception of a synchronized operation.
2. **Provide board governance training** to help Board members better understand their roles and develop actionable and realistic expectations of MPS Administration. This will foster greater public transparency and facilitate meaningful action.
 - a. Important board governance training components include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Understanding the role of board governance as opposed to operations regarding hiring or actions offices need to take to reach their goals. For example, roles for strategic planning may look like:

Strategic Planning Phases	Example Role and Responsibilities
Phase 1: Craft Mission, Vision, Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MPS Administration drafts mission, vision, and values. ● MPS Administration & Board coordinate to collect feedback from the community. ● MPS Administration revises and finalizes the mission, vision, and values. ● The Board formally adopts the District-wide Mission, Vision, and Values ● The Board holds MPS Administration accountable to acting in accordance with the mission, vision, and values of the district.
Phase 2: Set Goals and Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MPS Administration utilizes district data to draft goals and metrics aligned with the mission, vision and values. ● MPS Administration & Board coordinate to collect feedback from the community. ● MPS Administration revises and finalizes the goals and metrics. ● The Board holds MPS Administration accountable to making meaningful progress on goals and metrics.
Phase 3:	3. MPS Administration works with department leaders to

Determine Targets, Initiatives, Strategies	<p>determine targets, prioritize initiatives, and name specific strategies.</p> <p>4. The Board holds MPS Administration accountable to making meaningful progress on targets and continually evaluating the efficacy of initiatives and strategies.</p>
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- i. Working alongside the Administration to determine the format and cadence in which types of data (performance, facilities, financial, etc.) are reported to the Board and to the public. The data should be shared in a way that allows the Board to observe metrics through which the District is improving, increases public trust, and also enables the Board to hold the Superintendent accountable to a discrete and actionable set of data that is tied to Strategic Plan goals.
- ii. Intra-Board relationship and role training so that all members understand which members are responsible for District asks, such that they do not pull from the District's existing priorities.
- b. Board governance training programs and resources for consideration include:
 - i. Council of Great City Schools (CGCS): A program also used by benchmarked peer districts, CGCS makes certified school board coaches available to its member districts, offers 1-on-1 coaching for school board members, whole-board training, and also offers support for the Superintendent and their leadership team to support the implementation of effective school board governance practices. In addition, CGCS has a coinciding framework to accompany the coaching offered that utilizes a student outcomes-focused approach to governance.
 - ii. Texas Education Agency has a strong and comprehensive Framework for Board Development. It is broadly regarded as the gold standard of board governance frameworks and outlines the tasks that an effective board performs in its governing capacity.
 - iii. The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) training, a program which some Board members have previously participated in, supports school boards in identifying areas of strength and opportunities for increased growth and alignment as well as training them on member responsibilities. Components of the new member training program include Governance & Leadership, Legal & Policy Responsibilities, Finances & Facilities, and Advocacy & Community Relations.
- c. Secure access to legal counsel to exclusively represent and advise Milwaukee Public Schools Board through either an attorney kept on retainer or the addition of a Board-specific legal position.

Objective 2: Bolster Leadership and Operations Within the Department of Communications and Marketing

Findings

MPS faces significant challenges in rebuilding public trust, largely due to its inability to deliver strong academic outcomes for Milwaukee students. Historical events, including criminal investigations and leadership resignations at the Board and District levels, have eroded credibility and strained relationships with the community. The absence of a Chief Communications Officer has exacerbated these challenges, leaving the department without clear leadership to navigate these issues. Moreover, the very public challenge for the District to submit correct and timely data to DPI eroded trust and served as a primary impetus for ensuring operations and communication improve moving forward.

Communication efforts have been largely reactive, with some perceiving district narratives as overly positive or excessively negative, rather than balanced and transparent. High vacancy and turnover rates have further weakened the department, causing a loss of institutional knowledge and limiting its ability to meet evolving district needs. Moreover, insufficient documentation, codification, and cross-training practices have compounded these issues, highlighting the need for strategic leadership to rebuild trust and credibility.

Recommendations

The Department of Communications and Marketing will need cohesive operations and strong leadership to address the District's current communications challenges effectively. A streamlined approach to messaging, enhanced public relations, and coherent internal and external communications are critical to rebuilding trust and improving transparency. While hiring a new Chief Communications Officer (see Goal 1, Objective 1) is a key component of this effort, the focus should be recruiting a leader with expertise in strategic planning and organizational change management. Newly installed leadership should focus on the following recommendations to drive meaningful improvement of District communications:

1. **Develop a comprehensive communications plan** to ensure clarity, accessibility, and alignment with strategic priorities. This plan should encompass all communication channels, including overhauling the District's website. Expedite the timeline for updating and implementing the communications plan, ensuring it is completed by the end of 2025 instead of the current 2028 target. The communications plan should ensure that District communications efforts:
 - a. Provide regular updates to stakeholders, including families, students, and staff, about the progress of initiatives, challenges, and achievements.
 - b. Encourage multidirectional dialogue between the District, families, staff, and other stakeholders.
 - c. Strengthen relationships with families and community organizations to align communication strategies with broader community needs.

- d. Leverage inclusive feedback mechanisms such as surveys, community forums, and focus groups to gather input from diverse voices across the city.
 - e. Prepare strategies for managing crises effectively, ensuring timely and accurate information delivery.
 - f. Align directly with the District's vision and strategic goals to build a cohesive image.
 - g. Expand the use of digital communications tools, such as social media, email newsletters, and mobile apps to reach stakeholders effectively.⁴
2. **Institutionalize knowledge management** to ensure consistency and support more effective communication across departments. Introduce formalized knowledge management expectations and processes as part of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
 3. **Leverage current facilities planning** to identify communication gaps and opportunities for enhanced collaboration and messaging.
 - a. To date, the Long Range Facilities Master Plan (LRFMP) has included community town halls, online surveys, and Board presentations to engage the community. Steering committee meetings in early 2025 will work toward a final plan that reflects the needs, values, and aspirations of the communities that MPS serves. Given the emotional and logistical weight of closing and consolidating neighborhood schools, the stakes for success are high. The LRMFP could be a pivotal step toward bringing families and communities together in an effort to reimagine what is possible in the District more broadly.

Objective 3: Enhance Data Management and Utilization

Findings

The capacity of MPS' data infrastructure has been significantly diminished, particularly following the departure of key staff during the pandemic. Departments currently rely on multiple, disparate data-reporting systems, creating inefficiencies and reducing the ability to identify a single source of truth. For example:

- The Office of Finance requires data consolidation from separate payroll, HR, and facilities systems, making it labor-intensive and error-prone to track metrics like retention rates and budgets.
- The Office of Human Resources' PeopleSoft system does not integrate with the District's financial systems, leading to discrepancies in staffing and budget data.

A lack of standardized processes for reporting and reviewing data at the department and cabinet levels has resulted in inconsistent data-based decision-making. These challenges undermine transparency and hinder efforts to create a cohesive strategy for improving outcomes. Strengthening data management and utilization is essential for more effective,

⁴ For more details on Strategic Planning Benchmarking, see the [Appendix](#)

data-driven decision-making across the District and ensuring leaders have access to accurate, timely information.

Recommendations

As the Department of Communications and Marketing reprioritizes its goals, optimizing data management and utilization will provide increased insight into metrics that can inform precise communication. To achieve this, the Department should focus on the following key recommendations:

1. **Codify protocols** to ensure consistency and enable data-driven decision-making. Establish clear and standardized data protocols and review processes to be utilized across cabinet-level and department-level meetings. This might include:
 - a. A regular cadence by which succinct school performance, financial, HR, and other department data is shared with cabinet and discussed amongst senior level staff to identify areas of success and opportunity.
 - b. A standard template for reporting department and school-level data to other teams, the MPS Administration, and the Board.
 - c. A data-discussion protocol that can be enacted consistently across multiple department team meetings to drive discussions about how this data should drive changes in execution.
2. **Create unified datasets** to establish single sources of truth with complete information that can be used to evaluate the current landscape and plan for the future. This would entail:
 - a. Consolidating data from multiple sources, such as databases, spreadsheets, and APIs, into a unified format.
 - b. Establishing and maintaining high data quality standards, including implementing data validation rules and defining clear data governance policies to ensure data accuracy and reliability.
 - c. Building the technological foundation to support data management, including data pipelines, data warehousing, and tools for data extraction across departments.
 - d. Cultivating a data-driven culture within the organization, educating employees on data concepts and tools (as outlined in recommendation 4), and establishing clear responsibilities for data stewardship to promote effective data utilization and decision-making.
3. **Revamp public-facing dashboard** to fully align with the Strategic Plan, ensuring it is visually appealing, user-friendly, and accessible to all stakeholders, thereby enhancing transparency and building community trust. Key components of the dashboard include:
 - a. A summary of the District's strategic priorities, outlining the District's vision and mission statements, to provide content for the District's strategic direction.
 - b. A chronological outline of the District's implementation phases, highlighting key milestones and expected completion dates, to help stakeholders track progress.

- c. Visual representations of key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure progress towards the District's strategic goals, such as student achievement, graduation rates, attendance, and other critical educational outcomes
 - d. Insights into how the District is allocating resources, including funding and personnel, to support strategic priorities.
 - e. Details on how the District has involved stakeholders, such as students, parents, educators, and community members, in the strategic planning and implementation process. This should additionally include feedback mechanisms.
4. **Invest in upskilling the Department of Research, Assessment, and Data** through targeted training to augment capacity and expertise. Data fellowship programs could offer the opportunity for external skill development.
- a. Data training programs and resources for consideration include:
 - i. Leverage low-cost online webinars, open online courses, or open-access training materials such as Google Analytics Academy and Harvard's Data Science Certificate to provide foundational and advanced knowledge in data analysis and management.
 - ii. Collaborate with a Technical Assistance Provider to develop and deliver customized training sessions specifically designed to address the needs of the Research, Assessment, and Data department, ensuring alignment with organizational goals and priorities.



Cost and Implementation Timeline

Goal 2: Foster Meaningful Communication and Collaboration				
Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Priority	Low Budget Option	High Budget Option
Codify protocols to ensure consistency and enable data-driven decision-making. Establish clear and standardized data protocols and review processes to be utilized across cabinet-level and department-level meetings.	Now - Spring 2025	Low	-	-
Leverage current facilities planning to identify communication gaps and opportunities for enhanced collaboration and messaging.	Now - Fall 2025	Low	-	-
Provide board governance training to help Board members better understand their roles and develop actionable and realistic expectations of MPS Administration. This will foster greater public transparency and facilitate meaningful action.	Spring 2025 - Summer 2025	High	-	-
Create unified datasets to establish single sources of truth with complete information that can be used to evaluate the current landscape and plan for the future.	Spring 2025 - Spring 2026	Medium	\$0	\$500,000
Develop a comprehensive communications plan to ensure clarity, accessibility, and alignment with strategic priorities. This plan should encompass all communication channels, including overhauling the District's website. Expedite the timeline for updating and implementing the communications plan, ensuring it is completed by the end of 2025 instead of the current 2028 target.	Fall 2025	High	\$0	\$250,000
Institutionalize knowledge management to ensure consistency and support more effective communication across departments. Introduce formalized knowledge management expectations and processes as part of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).	Fall 2025	Medium	-	-
Consolidate Board and MPS District communication offices and align on priorities to ensure cohesive and aligned messaging across the District.	Fall 2025 - Spring 2026	High	-	-
Invest in upskilling the Department of Research, Assessment, and Data through targeted training to augment capacity and expertise. Data fellowship programs could offer the opportunity for external skill development.	Fall 2025 - ongoing	Medium	\$300 per certificate	\$1000 - \$2000 per person
Revamp public-facing dashboard to fully align with the Strategic Plan, ensuring it is visually appealing, user-friendly, and accessible to all stakeholders, thereby enhancing transparency and building community trust.	Fall 2026 - Fall 2027	Low	\$0	\$250,000

Goal 3: Operate and Fund Strategically

To plan for the future and ensure MPS is equipped for financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and long-term success, the District should prioritize the following **objectives**:

1. **Maintain external accountability structures** for continued support and progress monitoring during upcoming leadership changes, Board elections, and implementation of new systems.
2. **Invest in technological infrastructure and planning** so that systems are equipped to operate efficiently and effectively in future technological landscapes.
3. **Redesign key internal procedures to equip staff for success**, including thoroughly re-evaluating reporting and grievance procedures as well as onboarding policies, so that MPS can transform organizational culture for the better.

The following section will provide greater detail as to how MPS can take actionable steps toward meeting these objectives.

Objective 1: Maintain External Accountability Structures

Findings

Continued partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) offers an opportunity for organizational accountability and support in navigating toward long-term stability as the District emerges from a challenging period. Through its implementation of both the Corrective Action Plan I and Corrective Action Plan II (CAP), the District has been able to not only recover from the financial reporting issues it faced but also implement systems and structures to ensure it is set up to meet and even exceed reporting and transparency requirements in the future.

As the District navigates a continued period of transition, maintaining regimented DPI support through structured planning efforts will allow leaders to build an improved relationship between the District and State while institutionalizing procedures and systems that center student success.

Recommendations

External accountability structures have been critical to supporting newly installed leaders in the finance department and working to ensure timely corrective action. Looking ahead, as opportunities allow, the District should continue to maximize support offered by maintaining commitments, communicating transparently, and delivering on agreed-upon deadlines.

1. **Continue fully engaging with all DPI support offered** through regular meetings and structured planning processes, similar to the CAP. Beyond the CAP, continued meetings may support ensuring newly established finance and operational strategic goals and subsequent benchmarks are met following a period of poor financial reporting. Meetings should remain frequent in the near term (occurring at least monthly), though they could

transition to be less frequent as continued progress toward shared goals and benchmarks is observed.

2. **Empower cross-functional leaders** to identify additional areas of opportunity for increased DPI support and broader budgetary planning and partnership. Examples could include grant application opportunities for increased funding, professional development, or technological system communication improvements between DPI and MPS.

Objective 2: Invest in Technological Infrastructure and Planning

Findings

Throughout MPS, findings indicate that technological system investments have been made, particularly at school sites, over recent years. ESSER funds provided needed dollars for the District to make targeted improvements to instructional technology in the classrooms, student technology such as Chromebooks, and necessary upgrades to certain infrastructure.

Cybersecurity continues to be an ongoing priority for growth in an ever-evolving technology landscape that presents ongoing threats, and the Department of Technology Services is focused on hiring personnel to continue to improve data security. Still, the District lacks a comprehensive technology roadmap for the future, which would allow better budgetary allocation for technological investments and hiring opportunities as the District plans for the years to come.

In addition, findings reinforced that the siloed nature of Offices throughout the District and technological systems that don't communicate with one another delay organizational productivity and synergy. For example, certain Offices indicated operating on Microsoft platforms, whereas others use Google-based programs. Additionally, HR and Finance systems don't communicate effectively with one another, leading to delays in certain job postings and subsequently hindering the District's ability to fill vacancies promptly. Furthermore, DPI and MPS financial reporting software do not communicate optimally, complicating data-transferring processes and elongating financial reporting timelines. Multiple stakeholders and the CAPs highlighted the need for these systems to communicate seamlessly, but a solution has yet to be implemented. While some of the District's existing systems, such as PeopleSoft, could be upgraded and/or programmed to perform more optimally for departmental needs, the culture of resistance to change has hindered the District's ability to better use the technology it already has.

Recommendations

Looking ahead, the District has an opportunity to leverage recent technology investments, move towards greater alignment, and plan strategically for the future.

1. **Develop a five-year technology improvement roadmap** focusing on a streamlined and efficient future state that aligns with organizational goals and priorities. The roadmap should:

- a. Define clear strategic milestones in evaluating and ensuring the continued upgrade to infrastructure, hardware, and software so that the district can stay current with educational technology trends.
 - b. Develop financial plans that secure continued strategic investment in IT and data systems across schools and Central Office, including leveraging diverse funding sources and optimizing resource allocation.
 - c. Address gaps in infrastructure and devices to provide equitable access to modern technology.
 - d. Build a culture that integrates adaptable solutions that respond to emerging technological advancement and support dynamic problem solving.
2. **Invest in technology infrastructure** to allow synergy between DPI and MPS financial reporting software.
 3. **Provide external change management support** to ensure swift implementation of new systems organization-wide.
 4. **Standardize computing programs** to ensure departments are operating on a single cloud computing program rather than utilizing both Google and Microsoft.

Objective 3: Redesign Key Internal Procedures to Equip Staff for Success

Findings

After speaking with various personnel and reviewing standing procedures, it is clear that changes to onboarding processes and reporting policies are necessary to ensure staff are set up for success.

Findings indicate that the current onboarding process lacks clarity on internal structures and team responsibilities. This particularly affects internal hires or those who have changed roles due to staffing shifts. Many personnel accepting new positions lack the needed guidance and preparation to adopt newfound responsibilities and job duties. Some staff described having “no formal onboarding” and learning new skills by asking others questions in a “play-by-play, hands-on approach.”

Such an approach can strain the capacity of colleagues who become tasked with supporting their peers while simultaneously maintaining their own job duties. When possible, onboarding should be interactive and experiential as well as role-specific to ensure that all new hires are equipped to begin their new roles with confidence and success.

Ultimately, for meaningful changes to be made in any organization, the culture must be one that primes employees to learn new skills and be open to new ways of working. MPS’ current reporting policies enable people to use complaints against each other inter-departmentally, which creates a toxic work culture and makes implementing change difficult. As one person put it, “There’s a culture of fear within the District, and policies are a lot of the reason for that.”

The current grievance structure is set up such that if a leader tries to implement a change and a peer disagrees with that change, that peer could retaliate by subjecting the leader to undergo a formal investigation for bullying, fraud, etc., which requires significant time and resources. As a result, leaders are disincentivized from attempting to implement substantive changes and detracting employees remain within the organization longer than is desirable.

Recommendations

As the District hires new key personnel, a cohesive and comprehensive onboarding process for each position will enhance the ability of new hires to transition into their new roles seamlessly. To ensure that the onboarding process is swift, thorough, and valuable to each position, the District should focus on the following:

1. **Redesign the onboarding process** to ensure all new hires (both internal and external) have a comprehensive orientation to departmental procedures, role-specific duties, and broader cultural norms and practices. Onboarding should also highlight any opportunities for professional development and best practices for raising concerns or filing complaints in a solutions-oriented manner for all employees.
2. **Swiftly and thoroughly integrate the newly-hired Grants Accounting Manager and hire a new Comptroller**, ensuring the CFO has capacity to onboard both positions efficiently while carrying out her current duties. Equipping both positions for success is important for ensuring cohesion and operational capacity are maximized within the Office and beyond.
3. **Overhaul reporting and grievance policies** to promote a workplace culture of collaboration and learning while disincentivizing retaliation.
 - a. Ensure fair and impartial investigations by assigning trained personnel with no personal connection to the parties involved, who can conduct thorough fact-finding and mediate conflicts.
 - b. Provide multiple avenues for reporting grievances, including confidential options, to encourage open communication and address potential barriers to reporting.
 - c. Regularly review data to identify potential patterns of inequity and proactively address them through policy changes or training.
 - d. Periodically assess the effectiveness of the policy toward fostering a culture of collaboration and make adjustments as needed to reflect evolving needs and legal requirements.
 - e. Update the Employee Handbook at least annually to reflect policy and personnel changes.



Cost and Implementation Timeline

Goal 3: Operate and Fund Strategically				
Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Priority	Low Budget Option	High Budget Option
Redesign the onboarding process to ensure all new hires (both internal and external) have a comprehensive orientation to departmental procedures, role-specific duties, and broader cultural norms and practices. Onboarding should also highlight any opportunities for professional development and best practices for raising concerns or filing complaints in a solutions-oriented manner for all employees.	Now - Spring 2026	High	-	-
Continue fully engaging with all DPI support offered through regular meetings and structured planning processes, similar to the CAP. Beyond the CAP, continued meetings may support ensuring newly established finance and operational strategic goals and subsequent benchmarks are met. Meetings should remain frequent in the near term (occurring at least monthly), though they could transition to be less frequent as continued progress toward shared goals and benchmarks is observed.	Now - ongoing	High	no change from current	no change from current
Empower cross-functional leaders to identify additional areas of opportunity for increased DPI support and broader budgetary planning and partnership. Examples could include grant application opportunities for increased funding, professional development, or technological system communication improvements between DPI and MPS.	Now - ongoing	Medium	-	-
Swiftly and thoroughly integrate the newly-hired Grants Accounting Manager and hire a new Comptroller, ensuring the CFO has capacity to onboard both positions efficiently while carrying out her current duties. Equipping both positions for success is important for ensuring cohesion and operational capacity are maximized within the Office and beyond.	Spring 2025	High	n/a	\$189,000 annually
Standardize computing programs to ensure departments are operating on a single cloud computing program rather than utilizing both Google and Microsoft.	Spring 2025 - Fall 2025	Medium	\$0	potential savings TBD
Invest in technology infrastructure to allow synergy between DPI and MPS financial reporting software.	Spring 2025 - Spring 2026	Medium	\$0 (not recommended due to district capacity)	up to \$2M (contemplates new system) New ERP is up to \$5M
Provide external change management support to ensure swift implementation of new systems organization-wide.	Spring 2025 - Spring 2026	Medium	\$0 (not recommended due to district capacity)	cost included in above recommendation
Develop a five-year technology improvement roadmap focusing on a streamlined and efficient future state that aligns with organizational goals and priorities.	<u>Draft:</u> Fall 2025 - Spring 2026 <u>Implement:</u> Fall 2026 - Spring 2031	Medium	\$0	\$250,000 - \$500,000
Overhaul reporting and grievance policies to promote a workplace culture of collaboration and learning while disincentivizing retaliation.	Fall 2025 - Spring 2026	Medium	-	-

Conclusion

Milwaukee Public Schools has endured a period rife with challenges, exacerbated by internal and external factors that have compounded over decades. Externally, stalled population growth, enrollment declines, competitive school-choice dynamics, and national teacher shortages have strained the District's capacity to deliver consistent, high-quality education. Internally, leadership instability, a culture resistant to change, high staff turnover, and ineffective systems and reporting protocols have hindered accountability and performance. These challenges, coupled with outdated facilities and a history of financial mismanagement, have eroded public trust and disproportionately affected the District's most vulnerable students.

Despite these challenges, the District has a prime opportunity to enact meaningful change. Addressing these systemic issues will require urgent, intentional action to build stability, improve accountability, and restore trust. This report outlines three strategic goals that offer a forward-looking vision for MPS, designed to foster cross-functional collaboration, enhance organizational efficiency, and ultimately result in improved student outcomes. Through the accompanying objectives and recommendations within each goal, the District can take actionable steps toward improving organizational culture, implementing tangible changes to systems and processes, and increasing trust and partnership with community stakeholders—all of which will directly impact student experience, learning, and success.

As MPS emerges from a continued transition period at the Administrative and Board levels, these new insights offer the District an opportunity to start a new chapter. By investing in strategic planning and implementation support more broadly, the District can execute the recommendations made and capitalize on this opportunity to create positive change for students.

Appendix

Appendix I: Overview of Methodologies

To conduct this Comprehensive Operational Review, the MGT team employed a robust approach that included document analysis, benchmarking stakeholder interviews, and observations. Our analysis was informed by a diverse array of sources, ensuring a thorough understanding of the district's operations, challenges, and opportunities. Key methodologies are outlined below:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - **Conducted 18 stakeholder interviews** to capture diverse perspectives on operational challenges and successes. Participants include MPS District leadership, Department of Public Instruction (DPI) leadership, and MPS Board members.
 - **Observed a Cabinet meeting** led by the Chief of Staff to analyze cross-department collaboration
 - **Reviewed key board meetings** (Summer 2024 - January 2025) to assess decision-making and communication processes
- **Diagnostic Review:** The team analyzed approximately 40 organizational documents and reports to gain a detailed understanding of the district's operational landscape, including current and past stakeholder feedback. Key materials reviewed include:
 - **District strategic plan**, providing insights into District goals and priorities
 - **Organizational chart**, clarifying reporting relationships
 - **Operational budget** to identify funding allocation
 - **Key operational procedures**, including standard operating procedures for compensation, talent management, evaluation processes, and retirement processing.
 - **Board materials**, including the monthly newsletter and "Board Fast Facts"
 - **Corrective Action Plan** which detailed areas of compliance and improvement initiatives
 - **Baker Tilly Financial Reports**, including federal and state awards, audit findings (2022 and earlier) and the May 2023 Board presentation
 - **Human Resources reports**, such as the "Review of MPS HR Programs" and "HR Implementation Updates" highlighted personnel practices and ongoing challenges
 - **Communications audits** including the 2024 MPS Internal/External Communications Audit, supplemented by audits from 2018 and 2021-22
 - **Communications materials**, such as materials from community meetings on school safety and the superintendent search site
 - **Facilities materials**, such as the Long-Range Facilities Master Plan
- **Benchmarking Research:** Best practices were identified by reviewing operational documents from comparable districts, including:
 - Indianapolis Public Schools

- Baltimore County Public Schools
- Cleveland Metropolitan Schools
- Chicago Public Schools
- The School District of Philadelphia
- **Data Analysis:** The team reviewed data insights from the district, including raw data and results from previous analyses.
 - **Staff and vacancy data** for nearly 10,000 district roles, identifying patterns in reporting and hiring practices
 - **Survey results**, including the Risk Assessment Survey Results, the 2024 School Culture and Climate Survey Results and the Monthly Climate and Culture Snapshot Reports

Appendix II: Milwaukee Public Schools Proposed Organizational Chart

The structure below provides an illustrative example of what a restructured organizational chart may look like for Milwaukee Public Schools. Some of the below offices, departments, and titles exist in the current organizational structure, while others would be created or evolved.

Office of the Superintendent

Chief of Staff (or Deputy Superintendent)

- Director of Strategic Planning (Cross-Functional Role)
- Foundation President (Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation)

Office of Operations

Chief of Operations

- Facilities and Maintenance
- Transportation Services
- Technology Services
- Nutrition Services
- School Safety and Security

Office of Talent & Human Resources

Chief of Human Resources

- Benefits, Pensions, and Compensation
- Employment Relations
 - Equity, Access, and Inclusion
 - Employee Rights Administration
- Talent Management (works closely with Professional Development and Supports in the Office of School Administration)

Office of School Administration

Chief of Schools

- Recreation and Community Services
- Professional Development and Supports
- School Accountability (Regional Superintendents)
- School Culture
 - Restorative Practices
 - Multicultural Education
- Student Services
 - Enrollment
 - SIS Management
 - Attendance

Office of Academics & School Performance

Chief Academic Officer

- Research, Assessment, and Data
 - Black and Latino Male Achievement
- College and Career Readiness
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Specialized Student Services
 - Special Education Services
 - English Language Learner Services

Office of Communications

Chief Communications Officer

- Strategic Communications
 - Board Communications
 - District Communications
- Marketing and Public Relations
 - Press and Media
 - Social Media
- Community Engagement

Office of Finance

Chief Financial Officer

- Financial Planning and Budget Services
- Financial Accounting Services
 - Comptroller
- Procurement and Risk Management
- State and Federal Grant Programs

Districts that might serve as examples to explore:

- [Cleveland Metropolitan School District](#)
- [The School District of Philadelphia](#)
- [Chicago Public Schools](#)
- [Racine Unified School District](#)

Appendix III: Strategic Plan Examples

Strategic plan examples to explore:

District	Strategic Plan Overview
Indianapolis Public Schools	<p>Implementation Timeline: 2025</p> <p>Strategic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Access to Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction: Support adults at all levels of the system to build safe, engaging, and socially and emotionally supportive learning environments for students that ensure access to high-quality curriculum and instruction. Promote Racial Equity: Strengthen and expand our work to eliminate opportunity gaps, align policies and talent decisions to IPS’ antiracism agenda, and build capacity for team members to persistently interrupt and address institutional bias. Foster Authentic Engagement: Equip and engage families, team members, and the community in authentic and inclusive partnerships. Operate and Fund Strategically: Strengthen the efficacy and equity of Central Office supports, services, and resource allocations.
Baltimore County Public Schools	<p>Implementation Timeline: 2020 - 2028</p> <p>Strategic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Learning, Accountability, and Results: Increase achievement for all students while providing a variety of pathways to prepare students for college and career Safe and Supportive Environment: Provide a safe, orderly, and caring environment for students and staff High Performing Workforce and Alignment of Human Capital: Recruit and retain a qualified workforce, and create systemwide professional development plan to improve work performance Community Engagement and Partnerships: Communicate, engage, and partner with our families and communities Operational Excellence: The system commits to continuously improving organizational system, processes, and technologies to best support teaching and learning and create environments that effectively, efficiently, and equitably serve students, staff, and the broader school community

<p><u>Cleveland Metropolitan Schools</u></p>	<p>Implementation Timeline: 2023 - 2028</p> <p>Strategic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe and Supportive Culture: Establish a values-based organizational culture that ensures physical and emotional safety, promotes equity and excellence, and fosters authentic belonging and relationships for all scholars and adults. 2. A Strong and Engaging Instructional Core: Increase scholar engagement in rigorous and engaging learning by deeply and consistently implementing high-quality instructional materials and practices 3. Educator Learning: Establish professional learning experiences and opportunities that empower each CMSD educator to model our core values and improve their craft, with emphasis on opportunities related to instruction and instructional leadership. 4. Coherent Central System: Strengthen Central Office processes to ensure financial sustainability, increase responsiveness to schools, and promote equity, clarity, and coherence. 5. Engaged Community: Establish and maintain strong partnerships with scholars, families, staff, and other community members (including residents, civic leaders, local businesses, and nonprofits) that foster authentic engagement aligned to CMSD’s mission, values, and strategic plan
<p><u>Chicago Public Schools</u></p>	<p>Implementation Timeline: 2024 - 2029</p> <p>Strategic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every student has a rigorous, joyful, and equitable learning experience: Ensure that all students receive the opportunities and resources that meet their unique needs and aspirations, prioritizing those most harmed by the past 2. Every school creates the conditions for success, and the District provides equitable resources for schools: Resource every school across the District to meet the necessary conditions for a rigorous, joyful, and equitable learning experience, empowering those most impacted by structural inequity to reach their full potential. 3. Every community has inclusive collaborative partnerships for thriving schools: Strengthen the connections between our schools and our communities to improve the daily learning experience for all students

	<p>across all school types—neighborhood, magnet, selective enrollment, options, contract, and charter schools.</p>
<p><u>The School District of Philadelphia</u></p>	<p>Implementation Timeline: 2022 - 2027</p> <p>Strategic Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve safety and wellbeing: Safe environments are critical for our students and staff to learn and grow. This includes physical, social-emotional, and environmental safety. 2. Partner with families and communities: Foster trusting relationships with students, families, staff, and the entire Philadelphia community through transparent communication and frequent opportunities for partnership 3. Accelerate academic achievement: Provide all schools with rigorous, standards-aligned, culturally relevant curricula and prepare all leaders and educators to use high-quality and inclusive instructional tools. 4. Recruit and retain diverse and highly effective educators: Ensure that all school staff members are well-trained and prepared for their roles allows our schools to prioritize high-quality teaching and learning, and cultivate environments that are supportive and nurturing to both students and staff.



Appendix IV: Implementation Timeline

Recommendation	Timeline														
	Now	2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
Codify protocols to ensure consistency and enable data-driven decision-making. Establish clear and standardized data protocols and review processes to be utilized across cabinet-level and department-level meetings.	█	█													
Leverage current facilities planning to identify communication gaps and opportunities for enhanced collaboration and messaging.	█	█	█												
Redesign the onboarding process to ensure all new hires (both internal and external) have a comprehensive orientation to departmental procedures, role-specific duties, and broader cultural norms and practices. Onboarding should also highlight any opportunities for professional development and best practices for raising concerns or filing complaints in a solutions-oriented manner for all employees.	█	█	█	█											
Continue fully engaging with all DPI support offered through regular meetings and structured planning processes, similar to the CAP. Beyond the CAP, continued meetings may support ensuring newly established finance and operational strategic goals and subsequent benchmarks are met.	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█



Recommendation	Timeline														
	Now	2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
Meetings should remain frequent in the near term (occurring at least monthly), though they could transition to be less frequent as continued progress toward shared goals and benchmarks is observed.															
Empower cross-functional leaders to identify additional areas of opportunity for increased DPI support and broader budgetary planning and partnership. Examples could include grant application opportunities for increased funding, professional development, or technological system communication improvements between DPI and MPS.															
Swiftly and thoroughly integrate the newly-hired Comptroller and Grants Accounting Manager into the Office of Finance, ensuring the CFO has capacity to onboard both positions efficiently while carrying out her current duties. Equipping both positions for success is important for ensuring cohesion and operational capacity are maximized within the Office and beyond.															
Provide board governance training to help Board members better understand their roles and develop actionable and realistic expectations of MPS Administration. This will foster greater public transparency and															



Recommendation	Timeline														
	Now	2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
facilitate meaningful action.															
Standardize computing programs to ensure departments are operating on a single cloud computing program rather than utilizing both Google and Microsoft.															
Create unified datasets to establish single sources of truth with complete information that can be used to evaluate the current landscape and plan for the future.															
Invest in technology infrastructure to allow synergy between DPI and MPS financial reporting software.															
Provide external change management support to ensure swift implementation of new systems organization-wide.															
Clarify roles of independent offices by developing guiding documents to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and collaboration structures of OAE, Office of Board Governance, MPS Board, and MPS Administration.		Planning	Execution												
Conduct a "Superintendent Listening Tour" designed to help the newly installed superintendent better understand the District from the perspective of educators, scholars, families, and the community.															



Recommendation	Timeline														
	Now	2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
Hire a Chief Communications Officer and Chief of Operations with change management experience.															
Create a cross-functional role or team to be deployed on special projects. This role or team should leverage expertise across departments and ensure coherent execution.															
Conduct an external search to install new Human Resources leadership with the capability and willingness to shepherd comprehensive changes on an ambitious timeline.															
Evolve MPS' Strategic Plan by creating one cohesive document encapsulating cross-functional goals centered around student success. The new plan should replace MPS' Five Priorities and current strategic initiatives and serve as the guiding vision for the District.															
Explicitly link goals to student outcomes by drawing from peer-district examples. MPS should also consider increasing partnerships with The Council of Great Schools or similar entities that convene cross-district leaders to provide benchmarking opportunities and collegial support from additional comparable districts.															



Recommendation	Timeline														
	Now	2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
Develop a comprehensive communications plan to ensure clarity, accessibility, and alignment with strategic priorities. This plan should encompass all communication channels, including overhauling the District’s website. Expedite the timeline for updating and implementing the communications plan, ensuring it is completed by the end of 2025 instead of the current 2028 target.															
Institutionalize knowledge management to ensure consistency and support more effective communication across departments. Introduce formalized knowledge management expectations and processes as part of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).															
Overhaul reporting and grievance policies to promote a workplace culture of collaboration and learning while disincentivizing retaliation.															
Evaluate departmental structures ensuring logical reporting lines vertically by function.															
Expand departmental capacity by redesigning employee reporting processes, identifying high-leverage initiatives, and narrowing job scopes to transform culture and maximize employee contributions.															



		Timeline													
		2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Recommendation	Now	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
Consolidate Board and MPS District communication offices and align on priorities to ensure cohesive messaging across the District.															
Create a District-wide implementation plan to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration and track progress toward strategic priorities. In addition, develop systems and structures to ensure high-quality, efficient implementation.															
Develop a five-year technology improvement roadmap focusing on a streamlined and efficient future state that aligns with organizational goals and priorities.				Draft			Implement								
Invest in upskilling the Department of Research, Assessment, and Data through targeted training to augment capacity and expertise. Data fellowship programs could offer the opportunity for external skill development.															
Acquire external surge support to address immediate challenges and provide the flexibility needed to sustain progress during high-demand periods. The external support provider should oversee high-priority strategic efforts beyond the Office's near-term capacity such as revamping the recruitment model and maximizing the technological systems.															



Recommendation	Timeline														
	Now	2025			2026			2027			2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
		Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall					
Revamp public-facing dashboard to fully align with the strategic plan, ensuring it is visually appealing, user-friendly, and accessible to all stakeholders, thereby enhancing transparency and building community trust.															