



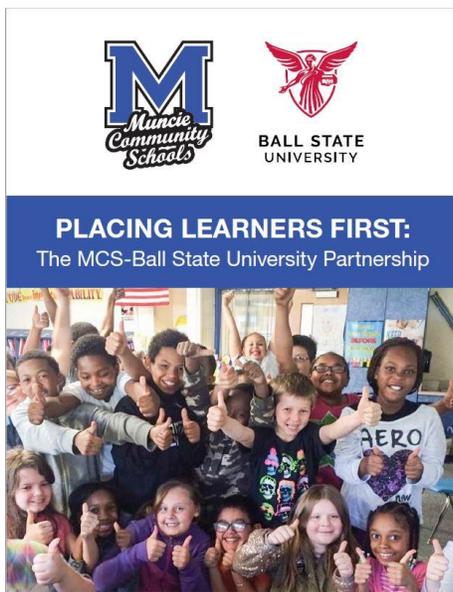
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MCS submits Academic Innovation Plan to State



Muncie, Ind. – It’s titled “Placing Learners First: The MCS-Ball State University Partnership” and it’s the culmination of many months of work between [Muncie Community Schools](http://www.muncie.k12.in.us) (MCS) and Ball State University. State lawmakers required this Academic Innovation Plan and a report of financial viability when the Legislature approved the partnership in 2018. The plan, and its implementation, provide the roadmap for the transformation of the city’s K-12 school system into an innovative, cradle-to-career model serving all students.

“Submitting the Academic Innovation Plan to state lawmakers is the latest example of the remarkable progress that has been made in our university’s innovative partnership with Muncie Community Schools,” Ball State President Geoffrey S. Mearns said. “I am grateful to everyone who has played a role in shaping this plan, which contains the principles and the pillars that will create a strong foundation for our schools—and ensure a bright future for our children.”

“We are very proud of the Innovation Plan as well as our recently completed strategic plan that sets the course for our next five years,” MCS School Board President James Williams said. “We appreciate our partnership with Ball State and our many other community partners. It truly is a collaborative community endeavor.”

The [Innovation Plan’s](#) two foundational principles are:

- Continuous, Aligned & Strategic Professional Learning
- Culturally Responsive Practices

The first foundational principle puts content-focused professional development at the forefront for developing and retaining highly competent and motivated education leaders throughout MCS. Culturally responsive practices provide enhanced engagement opportunities with students and their families, and are embedded in training and performance rubrics from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), an MCS partner.

“These two principles will provide the foundation on which our entire district is being built,” MCS Director of Public Education and CEO Dr. Lee Ann Kwiatkowski said. “You can’t have an outstanding school system without superior teachers and administrators, and we want these professionals to have access to cutting-edge concepts and technology that have proven results.

“Implementing culturally responsive practices is imperative in a district as diverse as ours, so having NIET resources behind the cadre of experts we’ve already assembled from our faculty, board and Ball State empowers us to build inclusive curricula and experiences for every student regardless of background and socioeconomic status.”

Building off the foundational principles are five operational pillars that provide the infrastructure for the educational strategies to help students succeed. They are:

- High-quality Pre-Kindergarten Education
- Recruitment, Development and Retention of Educational Leaders
- Student-centered Teaching and Active Learning
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Family and Community Engagement

With these pillars, MCS intends to be an innovative public school model for the rest of the country combining new and revolutionary ideas with proven best practices that will serve all learners.

“It’s a new day in Muncie public education. Muncie Community Schools will not settle for or implement second-best concepts,” Kwiatkowski said. “With Ball State’s help and this plan now in place, we have set a high bar for our students, teachers and administrators, and we expect the results to follow.”

Those expected results include lower professional turnover, higher graduation rates and increased family and community engagement.

Helping fuel this new, innovative approach is the generous philanthropic support MCS has received, led by the Ball Brothers Foundation, The Community Foundation of Muncie & Delaware County, the George and Frances Ball Foundation, First Merchants Bank, Old National Bank and Mutual Bank (now known as Northwest Bank). To date, more than \$5 million dollars has been committed to MCS’ margin of excellence funding.

In addition, area nonprofit organizations like Indiana University Health Ball Memorial Hospital, Meridian Health Services, Open Door Community Health Service, Purdue Polytechnic, Ivy Tech and others are assisting to meet MCS families' social, economic and health care needs.

The Academic Innovation Plan is intended to be a living document that contains two distinct parts: the Innovation Plan and the [MCS Strategic Plan](#). It will be reviewed, supplemented and modified on an annual basis at a minimum and can be reviewed in its entirety at muncie.k12.in.us/administration/mcs_strategic_plan.

About Muncie Community Schools

Serving the local community since 1855, Muncie Community Schools (MCS) educates more than 5,000 students at six elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school while also managing several other educational facilities. Through its unique partnership with Ball State University, MCS strives to maximize each student's potential so he or she can be a positive, productive member of society. Find out more about MCS or Director of Public Education and CEO Lee Ann Kwiatkowski at muncie.k12.in.us.

About Ball State

Founded in 1918 and located in Muncie, Ball State University is one of Indiana's premier universities and an economic driver for the state. Ball State's 22,500 students come from all over Indiana, the nation, and the world. The 790-acre campus is large enough to accommodate first-rate facilities and 19 NCAA Division I sports, but our welcoming and inclusive campus is small enough to ensure the friendliness, personal attention, and access that are the hallmarks of the University. Destination 2040: Our Flight Path establishes Ball State's ambitious goals for our second century. We Fly!

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