



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

PLACING LEARNERS FIRST:

The MCS-Ball State University Partnership

Executive Summary

In May 2018, the Indiana General Assembly adopted bold and innovative legislation to create a historic partnership between Ball State University and Muncie Community Schools (MCS). The legislation enables MCS to take advantage of its relationship with Ball State, and it grants the district “all administrative and academic flexibility to implement innovative strategies.”

That July, Ball State and MCS embarked on this partnership to transform the district into a national model for innovative, rigorous, and holistic education. This anchoring, citywide effort sets a new precedent for the role higher education can have in K-12 schools, and reaffirms Ball State’s commitment to its community. In its first year, the partnership:

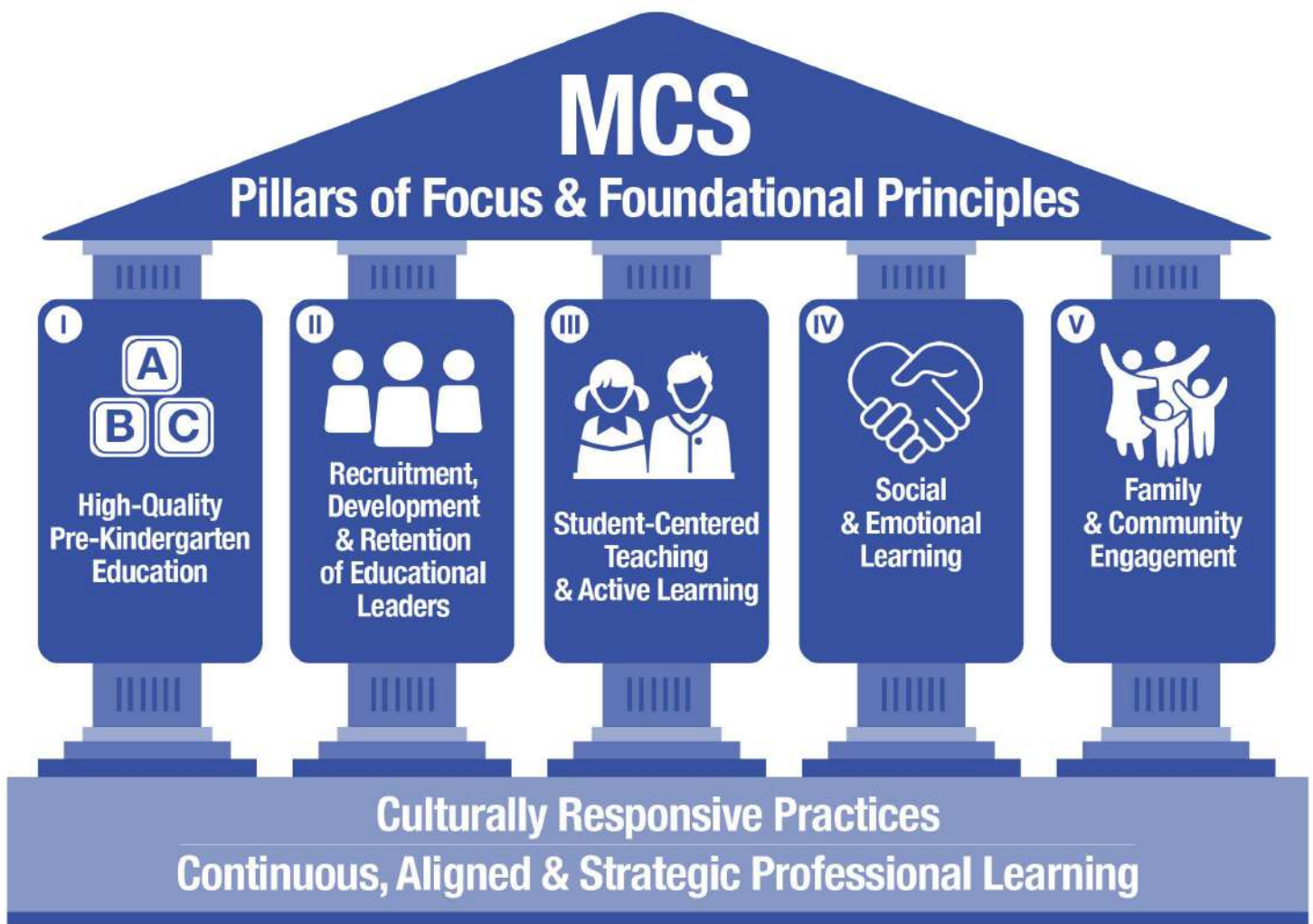
- Stabilized enrollment,
- Established a strong governance structure,
- Garnered more than \$5 million in pledges and grants,
- Launched new academic and enrichment programs and services,
- Strengthened relationships with community partners, and
- Enhanced professional development for MCS administrators, teachers, and staff.

The Community Spoke. We Listened.

Last year, the Joint MCS-Ball State Academic Innovation Council worked with community partners to hold listening sessions in every neighborhood in the city. MCS leaders visited families and educators at every school. Through these discussions and other feedback mechanisms, more than 500 MCS students, families, teachers, and Muncie residents shared their dreams for our schools.

Two Plans. One Vision.

A team of Ball State and MCS representatives distilled community feedback into prevailing themes that were then linked to leading research and best practices necessary to best serve our learners and their families. The team shared their findings with local, state, and national experts, who offered further guidance and perspective. The result: An **Academic Innovation and Financial Viability Plan** that outlines a novel, cradle-to-career, community-based approach. Together, with the aligned **MCS Strategic Plan**, these living documents will guide the future of Muncie Community Schools.



A Strong, United Foundation for Our Schools

Two foundational principles support five operational pillars to create a strong, united foundation for our schools. These interconnected components underscore our belief that students learn through an engaging and relevant curriculum, positive mentorship, and valuable collaborations within our city, university, and district.

Principle 1: Continuous, Aligned, and Strategic Professional Learning

Meaningful, relevant professional development will advance active learning, reflect leading best-practices, and support ongoing collaboration and coaching.

Principle 2: Culturally Responsive Practices

Relationships, curriculum, instruction, and assessments will reflect an understanding of the strengths of all people within our diverse MCS community.

Arising from these two foundational principles, the following five operational pillars provide the infrastructure on which we will develop and implement creative, innovative, and aspirational strategies that support our learners, empower our teachers, and bolster our innovative, community-based model:

- **Pillar I: High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education.** We will provide high-quality early childhood education for all 3- and 4-year-old children in the district, across the community.
- **Pillar II: Recruitment, Development, and Retention of Educational Leaders.** We will invest in the single most powerful influence on student achievement—instructional quality—provided by top educators who receive ongoing support and development.
- **Pillar III: Student-Centered Teaching and Active Learning.** With a focus on the whole child, we will align our work with state standards and provide students with clear college and career pathway options.
- **Pillar IV: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).** We will help students manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy, solve problems, make responsible decisions, and engage in healthy relationships.
- **Pillar V: Family and Community Engagement.** We will foster a web of support for MCS students and families, transform school buildings into community hubs, and enhance communication and engagement with families.

Sustainable, Systemic Change

The Academic and Financial Viability Plan outlines two phases to achieve our vision through sustainable, systemic revitalization. This fall, we will enter an initial three-year phase to further strengthen and stabilize academic and financial foundations to baseline performance levels. In year 4, we will commence implementation of our aspirational vision and strategies to achieve sustainable academic excellence.

Educational attainment is the most important aspect of leading a fulfilling and productive life. Your support of this partnership is a direct investment in the district's more than 5,000 students and their families. It reflects your commitment to the idea that an Indiana city can come together to create a (a national) model for cradle-to-career and community-based public education.