

Mount Vernon City School District
Academic Improvement and Financial Plans
2025–2026 through 2029–2030 School Years

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State Monitor

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary: Academic Improvement and Financial Plans

The Mount Vernon City School District (MVCSD or “the district”) is currently under State monitoring due to significant academic and financial challenges. This has led to the development of comprehensive improvement plans aimed at addressing both areas, ensuring a stable and successful future for the district and its students.

Key Challenges:

- **Academic:** Low student performance, staffing shortages (especially in key areas like special education and bilingual education), inconsistent implementation of effective teaching practices, and a lack of clear strategic academic planning.
- **Financial:** Declining enrollment, years of operating deficits, and a depleted fund balance, leading to a designation by the New York State Office of the Comptroller (OSC) of the district being in "significant fiscal stress."

Overarching Goals:

- Improve student academic achievement and outcomes.
- Achieve long-term financial stability and sustainability.
- Create a more effective, efficient, and equitable school system.

Key Strategies & Components:

- **Turnaround Leadership:** Improve district and school leadership through professional development, clear communication, and a focus on student achievement.
- **Talent Development:** Recruit and retain highly qualified staff, address staffing shortages, and provide ongoing professional development to improve teaching quality.
- **Instructional Transformation:** Implement evidence-based instructional practices, strengthen curriculum and assessment, and address the needs of diverse learners (including special education and English language learners).
- **Culture Shift:** Foster a positive school climate, improve family and community engagement, and ensure consistent implementation of district policies.
- **Financial Stability:** Enforce strict expenditure controls, optimize resource allocation, strategically manage staffing costs, and develop a long-term financial plan.

Oversight & Accountability:

The State Monitor (“the monitor”) will provide ongoing oversight and guidance to ensure that the district meets its goals and remains in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Regular reports will be submitted to track progress and ensure accountability.

This combined academic improvement and financial plan (“the plan” or “the Work Plan”) represents a comprehensive effort to address the challenges facing the MVCSD. Successful implementation will require strong leadership, dedicated staff, and active engagement of the entire community.

Assurances

This section includes a set of assurances with which the district commits to comply in order to implement the plan with full fidelity. This section makes explicit the district’s understanding that failure to comply fully with any of these assurances may be cause for the monitor to notify the New York State Commissioner of Education (“the Commissioner”) that a violation of an element of the plan has occurred. The assurance statements are as follows:

1. The MVCSD Board of Education (“the board”) shall operate in accordance with the “Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards.”
(https://wearelee.org/sites/default/files/documents/eight_characteristics_of_effective_school_boards.pdf)
2. The district shall implement the plan in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
3. The district shall implement the plan in coordination with all district plans that have been approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED or “the Department”), including but not limited to the district’s Consolidated Application for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) funded programs.
4. The board shall ensure that all motions are introduced and acted upon in a manner consistent with established district policies and that adopted resolutions are consistent with the goals, benchmarks, progress targets, and improvement strategies (referred to as “recommendations” in this document) contained in the plan.
5. The board shall ensure that the district administers all programs in a manner that is consistent with the goals, benchmarks, progress targets, and improvement strategies contained in the plan, applying sound fiduciary practices.
6. The district shall administer all funds consistent with the goals, benchmarks, progress targets, and improvement strategies contained in the plan.

7. The board and district leadership and staff shall not take any actions that are inconsistent with the goals, benchmarks, progress targets, and improvement strategies contained in the plan without the express written consent of the monitor.
8. The district shall take appropriate corrective action to address any instances in which district personnel act inconsistently with the goals, benchmarks, progress targets, and improvement strategies contained in the plan. Such actions shall be documented and made available for review consistent with laws and regulations pertaining to the privacy of records.
9. The district shall adhere to the timelines contained in the plan.
10. The district shall meet all requirements in law and in the plan regarding public consultation and engagement, including timely conduct of public hearings, provision of translation services, and translation of documents.
11. The district shall ensure that all funds are used solely for the benefit of bona fide district students, both public and nonpublic, and in support of the district's vision, mission and goals. .
12. The board shall conduct all business in adherence to the district's shared values statement and board policies.
13. The district shall provide all information and reports in such form and format and in accordance with such timelines as stipulated in law or as requested by the monitor and the Commissioner.
14. The district shall maintain such records as are required to determine the degree to which the district is meeting its goals, benchmarks, and progress targets and is implementing the recommended strategies contained in the plan and provide such records upon request to the monitor and/or Commissioner.

INTRODUCTION

Mount Vernon is a city in Westchester County, New York. It is an inner suburb of New York City immediately to the north of the borough of The Bronx. Mount Vernon has a 2025 population of 69,576, making it the 8th largest city in New York State and largest African-American majority city in the State. Mount Vernon's population is currently declining at a rate of 1.13% annually, and its population has decreased by 5.41% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 73,556 in 2020. (www.worldpopulationreview.com)

Mount Vernon's demographics are distinct from those of Westchester County, NY with the majority of city residents being Black or African American and Hispanic, while the county is majority White. The City of Mount Vernon has a Black or African American population of over 60%, a White population of around 16%, and a Hispanic population of about 18%, according to World Population Review and Data USA. In contrast, Westchester County's population is over 50% White, with Black or African American and

Hispanic populations at around 13% each, notes Data USA and Westchester County Planning. (<https://planning.westchestergov.com/population-stats>)

Mount Vernon has two major sections. Southside Mount Vernon is more urban, while northside Mount Vernon is more residential. Mount Vernon's downtown business district is on the city's south side, which includes City Hall, Mount Vernon's main post office, Mount Vernon Public Library, office buildings, and other municipal establishments.

MVCSD enrolled 6,454 students in the 2023–2024 school year according to NYSED data. District enrollment is 62% Black/African Americans, 30% Hispanic/Latino, 5% White, 2% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders, and 1% Multiracial. Student demographics include the following groups: English language learners (ELL) – 8%, students with disabilities – 20%, economically disadvantaged – 73%, homeless – 12% and foster care – 1%.

Between the 2012–2013 and 2023–2024 school years according to the district's State report card, kindergarten to grade 12 public school enrollments declined from 8,182 to 6,454. The district commissioned a comprehensive long range planning study conducted by the Western Suffolk Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). In this study, it was projected that MVCSD enrollment would continue to decline. Due to the decline in enrollment and fiscal concerns, on June 30, 2025, MVCSD closed three schools, changing the district's configuration from 16 schools to 13 schools. The prior configuration consisted of (1) Pre-K - 4, (3) K-8, (8) PreK – 8 and (3) high schools. The current configuration consists of (4) K- 8; (6) K-6; (2) 7-12; and (1) high school, with six schools having PreK classrooms (<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1733332376/mtvernoncsdorg/f87ha1aqv0c6h7rxocwm/MVCSDDemographicStudy.pdf>).

In the 2023–2024 school year, the district underperformed the State on key indicators, such as percent of students proficient in grades 3–8 English language arts (ELA) and math, 4-year high school graduation rate, percent of students graduating with a Regents diploma with advanced designation, and chronic absenteeism rate (that is students missing more than 10% of days of instruction) at the elementary and middle school level. The only indicator in the table below on which the district outperformed the State was the high school chronic absenteeism rate, which is surprising given the substantial gap in the graduation rate between the district and the State (www.nysed.gov).

The large gap in proficiency rates between the district and the State in grades 3–8 math (14%) is especially noteworthy since many people believe that math instruction is a better reflection of school efficacy than ELA scores, since math instruction typically

happens mostly in school while language development of children is happening everywhere all the time.

**OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL DISTRICT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
(2023-2024 School Year Results)**

Measure	Mount Vernon	New York State
3–8 ELA % Proficient	42%	46%
3-8 Math % Proficient	40%	54%
Chronic Absenteeism % Elementary/Middle	26%	25%
Chronic Absenteeism % High School	22%	32%
4-Year Graduation Rate (August 2024)	76%	86%
4-Year Graduation Rate: Regents with Advanced Designation	13%	33%

The district has been struggling academically and, in particular, fiscally for the past several years. The district was designated by OSC as being in "significant fiscal stress." Declining enrollment and years of operating deficits led to a significant drop in the district's fund balance, putting the district on a path to exhaust its reserves in the 2025–2026 school year. As a result, Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2025 provided the district with a State aid “spin up” loan and required Commissioner Betty Rosa to appoint a monitor to the district to “provide oversight, guidance, and technical assistance related to the academic and fiscal policies, practices, programs and decisions of the district, the board

of education, and the superintendent.” The monitor began work on July 15, 2025. The responsibilities of the monitor include the following:

1. Serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of the board.
2. Assist the board in adopting a conflict-of-interest policy that ensures board trustees and administrators act in the district’s best interests.
3. Work with the board to develop a proposed academic improvement plan and proposed financial plan for the district no later than November 1, 2025, for the 2025–2026 school year and the four subsequent school years.

The State Monitor Work Plan is intended to direct and guide all stakeholders, especially the newly appointed superintendent, Dr. Demario Strickland, to implement collaboratively recommendations that will improve student outcomes. Dr. Strickland was hired before the appointment and arrival of the monitor; however, Dr. Strickland’s former school district had an appointed monitor. Thus, Dr. Strickland is well versed in the role of the monitor and the importance of developing robust academic improvement and financial plans and then implementing them with fidelity.

Organization of the Work Plan

The monitor’s Work Plan is derived from an evidence-based theory of change called the *Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement*. The monitor’s Work Plan report is divided into seven sections:

1. Assurances
2. Introduction
3. Organization of the Work Plan
4. Methodology for Data Collection
5. Theory of Change for District Improvement
6. Findings and Recommendations by Domain
7. Summary
8. Appendix: Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards

Methodology for Data Collection

In reviewing the various plans created by monitors assigned to other school districts, the monitor has elected to use the *Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement* in the development of the Work Plan. Participatory Action Research formed the essence of data collection for the academic and financial components of this plan. The monitor took a three-pronged approach to data collection. Data was initially collected through actively participating in the daily work activities of central office staff members. Second,

purposeful sampling was used to identify individuals internal and external to the organization to participate in interviews and focus groups. Lastly, district documents and other artifacts (when available) related to the district were examined. The monitor actively participated in multiple meetings with various combinations of executive cabinet members, Joint Cabinet members, and board officers as follows:

- Executive cabinet meetings.
- Joint Cabinet meetings.
- Board officer meetings along with the superintendent.
- Superintendent, former Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Treasurer, head of payroll, Associate Superintendent for Human Resources, and newly appointed Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Finance.

The following topics were discussed at multiple executive cabinet, joint cabinet, and administrative meetings: data driven instruction, districtwide professional development, technology, and standard operating procedures. The monitor has had a difficult time in getting access to many contracts from across the district, making it problematic to obtain the necessary data/information to complete the Work Plan.

The monitor will be shadowing the newly hired Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Finance (hired 10/15/25) in the upcoming months. The monitor as an ex-officio member of the board has actively participated in all board deliberations since July 15, 2025, and has assisted the board with improving structures and protocols.

The second data collection method used individual interviews and focus groups. Participants were selected based on staff recommendations, affiliation or oversight responsibilities, people who volunteered to be interviewed, and people identified in documents from previous reviews of the district. Multiple informal interviews were conducted with MVCSD staff and external partners as documented in the tables below.

The third data collection source was document analysis. The monitor reviewed a wide variety of academic documents from the district, NYSED, and Westchester BOCES.

Table 1 – Summary of MVCSD Interviews Conducted

Stakeholders	No. Meetings	Stakeholders	No. Meetings
Superintendent	30+	Board Of Trustees	6+
Assistant/Associate Superintendents	20+	Executive Board of Trustees	10+
Directors/Supervisors	8+	Principals	3+
Teachers	23+	Parents	35+
Staff	30+		

Table 2 – Summary of Focus Group Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder	No. Meetings	Stakeholder	No. Meetings
Parent/Teacher Association	TBA	Teachers	1
High School Principals	1	Staff	1

Table 3. Summary of External Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder	No. Meetings	Stakeholder	No. Meetings
NAACP	1	Assemblymember Pretlow	1
State Senator Bailey	1	Mayor Shawn Patterson-Howard	3
NYSED	14+	Conference of Big 5 Jennifer Pyle	3
City of Mount Vernon Office of Civil Service	3	Westchester BOCES	7
New York State School Boards Association	2	Executive Leadership, other NY school districts	6
Association of School Business Officials of New York	1	CFOs of other NY school districts	3
City of Mount Vernon Commissioners/Directors	8+		

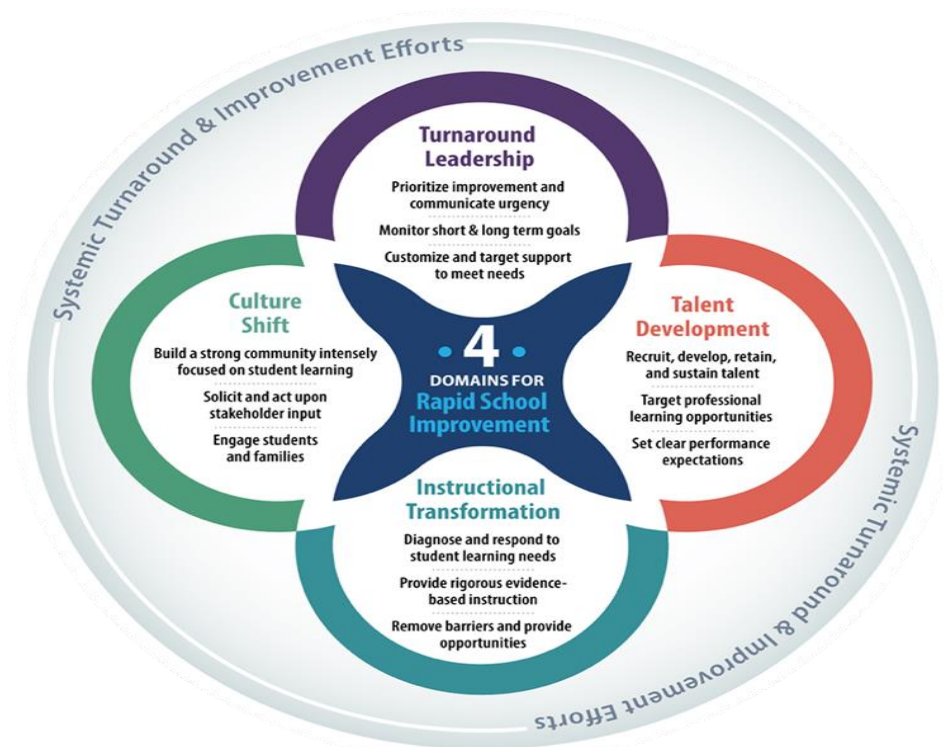
Theory of Change for District Improvement

After researching models for district/school turnaround work, the monitor has chosen the Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement, which was used for the development of the Rochester City School District Academic Improvement Plan. The Center on School Turnaround at WestEd developed this framework to help states, districts, and schools lead and manage rapid improvement efforts. The framework builds upon the practices of successful school turnaround in four domains that both research and experience suggest are central to rapid and significant improvement:

- Turnaround leadership;
- Talent development;
- Instructional transformation; and
- Culture shift.

The framework is designed to take into account an improvement initiative's local context and implementation.

Figure1: Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement



The monitor believes that this plan, with its four domains, gives the MVCSD the framework necessary to implement a comprehensive approach to academic turnaround that will improve outcomes for students.

Findings and Recommendations by Domains

Findings for Turnaround Leadership Domain

1. There have been instances of individual board trustees using emails and phone calls to micromanage the superintendent and staff on whatever issue a board trustee considers of immediate importance, which diverts the attention of the superintendent and staff from their daily mission critical work.
2. There have been instances of board trustees not adhering to “chain of command” protocols when approached by parents, teachers, staff, and community members, which leads to misunderstandings, confusion, and “grandstanding” at board meetings.
3. There have been instances of board trustees not always adhering to board policies governing communications (internal/external and verbal/written). This has led to a culture of mistrust and lack of respect among board trustees and with the superintendent.
4. There have been instances in which individual board trustees have not displayed an understanding of the difference between governance (setting policy) and management (executing operations)
5. The board does not have up-to-date board vision and mission statements or board goals.
6. While the board updates a few policies each year, the board lacks a consistent schedule to ensure that all board policies are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
7. The board and the superintendent have not finalized the goals to be used to evaluate the performance of the superintendent as well as the process/calendar for evaluation.
8. There have been instances in which board trustees have used their positions to benefit family members, such as participating in decisions affecting their employment. This has created an appearance of conflict of interest, discrediting the board, staff, and the district.
9. The board lacks both a process for trustees to engage in professional development and a training calendar.
10. The board needs to prioritize student achievement, ensuring that all board decisions reflect a commitment to improving student academic success.
11. District leadership focuses on their specific areas of administration, which has led to “siloeing” of departments. There is a lack of communication amongst academic and operational areas, leading to massive miscommunication and lack of continuity of practices, procedures, and cohesiveness.

12. The district lacks an up-to-date strategic plan or academic improvement plan with goals, processes, and protocols that clearly articulate the district's vision for how the district will significantly improve student learning.
13. The district leadership does not provide specific support for each school that is based on an analysis of the school's needs and the school's priorities.
14. The duties and responsibilities of the executive cabinet and cabinet members are misaligned or unclear due to rapidly changing leadership in these positions.

Recommendations and Evidence of Implementation

Recommendation (1)

1. By February 1, 2026, the board shall adopt standard operating procedures (SOP) for the professional development and training of board trustees, which shall include protocols for onboarding new board trustees. By January 30, 2026, the board and district shall implement fully the SOP. (2026, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. Board resolution adopting SOP.
2. Beginning February 28, 2026, submission by the district to the monitor no later than 30 days following a new board trustee taking office of artifacts demonstrating that the new board trustee has been on-boarded in accordance with all elements of the SOP.

Recommendation (2)

1. All board trustees shall be required to attend at least two professional development offerings annually designed to build capacity on the board, cultivate trust and respect among the board trustees and the superintendent, and engage in continuous learning as a board to improve governance skills while prioritizing the needs of all students. (2026, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. The offerings shall be conducted by the New York State School Boards Association or other comparable entities. The schedule of the training sessions for the 2025–2026 school year shall be submitted to the monitor no later than February 1, 2026. In subsequent years, the schedule of the annual training sessions shall be submitted to the monitor no later than September 30.

Recommendation (3)

1. Beginning immediately, all board meetings shall be conducted in strict accordance with Robert's Rules of Order. (2026, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. Documentation shall be collected every time legal counsel invokes the need for the board to follow Robert's Rules of Order. This shall be implemented immediately.
2. Artifacts demonstrating the following shall be made accessible for review by the monitor:
 - Annual training at the first board meeting on Robert's Rules of Order
 - District In-house counsel serving as Parliamentarian and documentation of violations of Robert's Rules of Order by trustees.

Recommendation (4)

1. By May 1, 2026, and by May 1 annually thereafter, the board shall have developed and adopted board goals and vision and mission statements. (2026, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. Board resolution adopting the board's vision, mission, and goals.

Recommendation (5)

1. By February 1, 2026, the board shall adopt a process for regularly reviewing and updating board policies that has been developed by the Board Policy Committee. (2026, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By February 1, 2026, the board shall work with the New York State School Boards Association or organization with comparable expertise to complete a Policy Overview Service.
2. By February 1, 2026, the Policy Committee Chair shall present during a Policy Committee of the Whole meeting the protocol/calendar for reviewing board policies.

Recommendation (6)

1. By January 30, 2026, and by September 30 annually thereafter, the board shall complete the superintendent's evaluation process and submit it to the monitor. (2026, completed annually)

Evidence of Implementation

1. Submission of evaluation process to the monitor.

Recommendation (7)

1. Beginning no later than February 1, 2026, the superintendent shall reconfigure the duties and responsibilities of the executive cabinet and cabinet to optimize efficiencies and align with the changing needs of the district. (2026)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By February 1, 2026, the superintendent shall provide the monitor with a copy of the organizational chart of the executive cabinet and cabinet and the duties and responsibilities of all cabinet members.

Recommendation (8)

1. By June 30, 2026, district leadership shall develop a calendar for the period from July 1, 2026, through December 1, 2027, that shows when each SOP shall be implemented for all district departments, areas, and programs. The SOP shall provide clear, step-by-step guidance that defines the purpose, responsibilities, and procedures for specific daily functions for all departments, areas and programs. This shall be supported by a clear communication strategy that uses multiple channels, such as email, meetings, and training sessions, to ensure all staff are aware of and trained in new and updated procedures. (year 1, multi-year)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 1, 2026, a copy of the SOP calendar shall be provided to the monitor.
2. By January 1, 2028, the superintendent shall provide the monitor, in such format as determined by the monitor, with a report on the implementation of the SOP.
3. By July 1 of each year, the district shall review and submit updates to all SOPs to the monitor.

Findings for Talent Development Domain

1. There are a large number of key staff vacancies throughout the district, including but not limited to, the Assistant Superintendent for Business, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and Director of English Language Learning. In addition, there are teaching and support staff vacancies in all schools.

2. The district has had extreme difficulties in attracting qualified candidates in all posted positions throughout the district due to the negative reputation of the district as reported by district and school staff.
3. Currently, there is not an organizational chart for the district, especially for district offices and departments.
4. In recent years, several vital departmental positions have been eliminated. causing a severe shortage of expertise that has led to the absence of key components in program areas such as nursing, human resources, pupil personnel services, and services to ELL.
5. A number of teachers and administrators have been tenured by estopple due to the failure of the district to conduct evaluations in adherence to collective bargaining agreements. This issue also pertains to staff with a probationary period.
6. There are not a comprehensive staff professional development calendar and plan.
7. District employees report that there is in the district a culture of fear, retribution, nepotism, and cronyism regarding job security, school climate and culture, and peer relations.
8. There is a lack of mentorship for new teachers, especially during their first three years.
9. Administrators, teachers, and support staff are currently working under expired collective bargaining agreements.

Recommendations and Evidence of Implementation

Recommendation (1)

1. By February 1, 2026, the superintendent shall distribute to the board and district staff an organizational chart showing clear reporting lines for all departments.
2. By August 1, 2026, a detailed description of job duties and responsibilities for all staff in each unit shall be attached to the organizational chart.

Evidence

1. By July 1, 2026, the district shall provide the monitor with a copy of the organizational chart and associated job descriptions.

Recommendation (2)

1. By May 1, 2026, the district shall develop an SOP and training program on progressive discipline of employees.

2. Beginning July 1, 2026, the superintendent shall provide to the executive cabinet a monthly report on disciplinary actions taken in the previous month for review and potential board action.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By June 15, 2026, the district shall provide the monitor with a copy of the progressive discipline SOP and the schedule of staff training.
2. Beginning July 1, 2026, the district shall provide the monitor biweekly with a redacted report on employee progressive discipline actions taken by the district.

Recommendation (3)

1. By June 30, 2026, the district shall submit its strategy to develop a timely, efficient, and equitable talent management cycle for recruiting, selecting, onboarding, supporting and exiting staff for implementation to the monitor and superintendent.
2. By June 30, 2027, the district shall begin implementation of the talent management plan. (year 2)

Evidence

1. By July 1, 2026, the district shall submit a copy of the strategy to the monitor.
2. By August 1, 2027, the district shall submit evidence of implementation of the talent management plan in a format mutually agreed upon by the district and the monitor.

Recommendation (4)

1. By May 1, 2026, the district shall develop a mechanism to create accurate monthly staffing data, utilizing position control, for master scheduling, staffing allocation, and budget development.
2. By July 1, 2026, the district shall effectively use position control functions to accurately produce a monthly position control report for review and action by the cabinet, as needed. (2026)

Evidence or Implementation

1. The monitor shall be provided weekly with position control reports in February, March, August, and September, and monthly during other months.

Recommendation (5)

1. By September 30, 2026, district leadership shall develop a three-year staffing plan, in a format approved by the monitor, to fully staff the following departments: Human

Resources, Finance, Special Education, Bilingual Education and World Languages, and Curriculum and Instruction. (year 2 & year 3)

Evidence

1. By July 31, 2027, the district shall provide the monitor with evidence that the above listed departments are fully staffed.

Recommendation (6)

1. Beginning immediately, the Human Resource Department shall review the implementation of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), Multidimensional Principal Performance Rubric (MPPR) and Performance Evaluation Program (PEP) to ensure compliance with all provisions of contracts. (multi-year)

Evidence

1. Evidence of full adherence to all components of the APPR, MPPR and PEP to be initiated in a format approved by the monitor shall be included in each district quarterly and each annual report.

Recommendation (7)

1. By June 1, 2027, district leadership shall, with input from school leadership, develop a comprehensive and data driven annual professional development plan for school leaders, teachers, and classroom support staff with corresponding funding sources to support district priorities with an emphasis on the needs of students and staff. Implementation and monitoring of the professional development plan shall begin upon its presentation to the board. The professional development plan, which shall be updated annually by June 30, must be grounded in current research and evidence based best practices in the areas of literacy, mathematics, bilingual education, culturally responsive education, and high leverage instructional practices. (2027, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 31, 2027, the professional development plan shall be reviewed by the superintendent and monitor and presented to the board. The superintendent shall provide reports on implementation of the professional development plan twice a year to the monitor, in a format and on a timeline mutually agreed upon by the monitor and superintendent.

Findings for Instructional Transformation Domain

1. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction is understaffed and under resourced, with the following staff reporting to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Administration:

- Director of Humanities (K-12)
- Director of Assessment, Math and Science (K-12)
- Director Pre-K, Gifted and Talented and Special Projects
- Director of Student Personnel Services (K-12)
- Director of Physical Education and Health (K-12)
- Director of Career and Technical Education
- Director of Technology (K-12)

Currently there are no district administrators designated to oversee music, art, foreign languages, and English as a new language instruction.

2. The special education program, which serves 20% of district enrollment, faces a number of challenges:

- Lack of placement of students in the least restrictive environment.
- Lack of a standard operating procedure to assign personnel (teaching assistants). There is a need to review and redistribute resources to appropriately support the needs of students and reduce the risk of overstaffing.
- Use of teaching assistants as substitute teachers, resulting in violations of students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- Lack of implementation of formalized protocols and procedures that align with Commissioner's Regulations Part 200. The district will need to review protocols and procedures for all special education services, including the referral process, parental consent, evaluations, Committee on Special Education meetings, annual reviews and re-evaluations, due process, and IEP development and timelines.
- Inconsistent provision of IEP specified services, such as speech, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and services for the hearing and/or the visually impaired.
- Lack of:
 - equitable placement of special education classes (continuum programming) in individual schools throughout the district.
 - evidence that the district reviews data comparing the performance of students with disabilities to other students in the district.
 - targeted professional development for special education teachers and support staff.

- Failure to bill appropriately for Medicaid reimbursements for physical, occupational, and speech therapy; behavioral health services; and routine health screening and preventive care.
3. The district did not meet the 95% participation rate requirement for students with disabilities on the State grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments for the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years.
 4. The district’s four-year graduation rates as of August 2023 (74%) and 2024 (76%) were below the Statewide average. The four-year graduation rate for students with disabilities is significantly lower at 39% for the 2022–2023 school year and 51% for the 2023–2024 school year.
 5. There are a number of concerning issues regarding the program for ELL (8% of district enrollment):
 - There is no administrator or director for services to ELL and a lack of bilingual, ENL and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) certified teachers.
 - There is inconsistency in obtaining prior records of incoming students, resulting in some instances in delay of the administration of the NYS Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL).
 6. The four-year graduation rate for ELL, 37% in the 2022–2023 school year and 48% for the 2023–2024 school year, is significantly lower than the district average.
 7. The district did not meet the 95% participation requirement for the All Students group on the State grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments in either the 2022–2023 or 2023–2024 school years.
 8. The district does not implement a systemic Response to Intervention (RTI) program.
 9. With the absence of a District Strategic Plan, there is no roadmap for long-term success based on aligning resources with clear goals, promoting accountability, and adapting to change.
 10. There is not a professional development plan aligned to a district academic improvement plan.
 11. While each school has developed a School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP), there is little to no evidence of implementation of the SCEPs by the schools or monitoring of the SCEPs by district leadership.
 12. Currently the district administers i-Ready three times annually in grades K–8 as a formative assessment; however, there is no evidence of how the assessments are used to identify students’ specific learning needs, strengths, and weaknesses to assist with planning and differentiating instruction.
 13. An up-to-date high school course catalog or listing of all available courses does not appear to be publicly available, if they exist at all.

14. The district does not have a process for monitoring middle/high school students' credits earned and Regents passed to determine the appropriate grade to which students should be assigned.
15. There is a lack of consistency in tracking student progress and helping students regain lost ground through academic supports, such as tutoring, co-curricular activities, and tiered interventions. There is also a lack of extended learning opportunities such as summer bridge programs, afterschool and supplemental educational services, Saturday academies, and enrichment programs.

Recommendation (1)

1. To improve academic achievement across the district will require a fully resourced team of highly qualified content area specialists with expertise in curriculum, data driven instruction, and assessment for all student populations, including students with special needs and ELL. (2027)

Evidence of Implementation

1. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction shall be restructured and the additional appropriate leadership lines shall be included in the proposed 2027–2028 school budget that is provided to the monitor on March 1, 2027.

Recommendation (2)

1. District administration should establish an effective process for ensuring timely completion of annual IEP reviews. The Director of Special Education or designee shall by June 1, 2026, establish timelines for finalizing the annual reviews. (2026, reviewed annual)

Evidence of Implementation

1. Effective immediately, the district should establish an operational process for ensuring timely completion of annual reviews and provide monthly IEP review reports to the monitor and superintendent in a mutually agreed upon format.

Recommendation (3)

1. Beginning no later than July 31, 2026, the Department of Special Education shall ensure that all IEPs are finalized timely after the Committee on Special Education meeting.
2. Effective immediately, the district shall establish procedures and designate staff who are responsible for facilitating timely parent receipt of their child's IEP.

Evidence of Implementation

1. Beginning June 1, 2026, the district shall provide the monitor, in such format and in accordance with a timeline mutually agreed upon by the monitor and the district, reports on the percentage of families that received timely receipt of a student's IEP.
2. By July 31, 2026, the district shall submit documentation to the monitor demonstrating that the district has developed and is implementing a process that allows supervisors to monitor the timeliness of IEP completion, review benchmarks for student success, and alert appropriate staff of upcoming meetings. (2026, reviewed annually)

Recommendation (4)

1. In collaboration with NYSED's Office of Special Education, the district shall review its protocols and procedures to ensure that they are aligned with Commissioner's Regulation Part 200. The district shall:
 - No later than August 30, 2026, participate in an NYSED Office of Special Education review of the district's special education program.
 - By November 30, 2026, develop the first draft of the alignment plan.
 - By February 1, 2027, develop the final draft of the alignment plan.
 - By July 1, 2027, begin Implementation of the alignment plan. (2026, 2027, annually reviewed)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By December 1, 2026, and February 2, 2027, the district shall submit to the monitor copies of the draft and final alignment plans, respectively.
2. By August 1, 2027, the district administration shall submit, in such format as mutually agreed upon by the district and the monitor, documentation that the district has developed and is implementing written protocols and procedures for all specialized services processes, including referrals, parental consent, evaluations, CSE meetings, annual reviews and re-evaluations, due process, IEP development, and IEP Direct.

Recommendation (5)

1. By December 1, 2026, the district shall review and develop a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) plan that establishes high-quality instruction, with learning environments that:
 - are effective and efficient,
 - are relevant for and supportive of all students,
 - identify those at risk for poor learning outcomes, and

- provide increasing intensity of intervention based on a student's response. (2026)
- 2. By March 1, 2027, the district shall begin the implementation of the MTSS plan in grades K–8, with full implementation no later than September 1, 2027.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By January 1, 2027, the district shall provide evidence to the monitor of a well-developed MTSS plan for grades K-8.
2. By February 20, 2027, the district shall provide to the monitor the implementation plan for the MTSS.
3. By September 1, 2027, the district shall provide documentation to the monitor, in a format mutually agreed upon by the district and the monitor, that the district has provided mandated training for school leadership teams and is implementing an MTSS program in grades K–8.

Recommendation (6)

1. By September 30, 2027, the district shall review, formalize, and begin to implement a districtwide comprehensive assessment plan. The comprehensive plan shall contain strategies to measure levels of proficiency for content standards, English language acquisition, and reading and math levels that will aid in monitoring student progress, guiding placement, assessing teaching method effectiveness, and providing intervention/support inside the classroom. (2027)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 31, 2027, district leadership shall submit to the superintendent and the monitor a districtwide comprehensive assessment plan for review.
2. Beginning with the 2027 2nd quarterly progress report, the district shall provide evidence, in a format determined by the monitor, of the district's successful implementation of the comprehensive assessment plan.

Recommendation (7)

1. By July 1, 2026, the district should hire a bilingual administrator to supervise the bilingual education department. (2026)

Evidence of Implementation

1. Inclusion of the position of bilingual education administrator in the adopted 2026–2027 school year budget.

Recommendation (8)

1. The district shall develop a comprehensive bilingual education program with guidance from the NYSED Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL). The district shall:
 - No later than May 30, 2026, participate in an NYSED OBEWL review of the district's ENL program.
 - By November 30, 2026, develop the first draft of the ENL plan.
 - By February 1, 2027, develop the final draft of the ENL plan.
 - By May 1, 2027, begin implementation of the ENL plan.(2026, 2027, annual review)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By December 1, 2026, and February 2, 2027, the district shall submit to the monitor copies of the draft and final ENL plans, respectively.
2. By April 30, 2027, the district administration shall submit in such format as mutually agreed upon by the district and the monitor, documentation that the district has developed and is implementing a comprehensive bilingual education program.

Recommendation (9)

1. By July 1, 2027, the board shall adopt a district strategic plan that shall include each school's School Comprehensive Educational Plans (SCEPs) in alignment to the strategic plan. (2026, 2027)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By May 31, 2026, the district shall provide the monitor with documentation that a districtwide strategic planning process, which will include all district stakeholders, has begun.
2. By May 31, 2027, the district shall submit to the monitor in accordance with a timeline specified by the monitor copies of the strategic plan calendar, agendas, and summaries of meetings with district stakeholders, and a copy of the board resolution adopting the strategic plan.
3. By July 1 annually, district leadership and the monitor shall review the strategic plan.

Recommendation (10)

1. The district shall develop a comprehensive high school course catalog for the three schools that serve high school grades. (2026, yearly reviewed)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By October 31, 2026, district leadership shall submit a final draft of the district high school course catalog to the superintendent and monitor.
2. By November 31, 2026, the superintendent shall submit the final draft of the district high school course catalog to the board for approval for full implementation beginning fall 2027.

Findings for Culture Shift Domain

1. The district website describes the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Team that assists schools and the district to better engage families in education; however, the monitor has been unable to obtain any data or information on the effectiveness of this program.
2. District leadership reports that there is inconsistency among schools in implementing the district's Code of Conduct and minimal use of restorative practices.
3. The district closed three elementary schools, effective July 1, 2025. These closings, which caused the reassignment of many students and staff, have caused much dissension throughout the district. A document review suggests that there were inconsistent explanations provided regarding the selection of schools for closure; conflicting enrollment data; closure plans that were not implemented as written; lack of consistent communication to all stakeholders; and failure to follow protocols for the reduction in force (RIF).

Recommendation (1)

1. Beginning in spring 2027, the district leadership shall review and revamp the district FACE program to create a structured, collaborative system in which schools and families partner to support a child's education through clear communication, shared decision-making, and varied activities that cater to the different needs and schedules of families.
2. By September 1, 2027, the district shall implement the revised FACE plan/program, which shall have the following elements:
 - clear expectations of roles and responsibilities,
 - clear and open communications between school and home,
 - an accessible format that is uniform and understandable and meets parents where they are by using various methods to connect with parents to overcome language and cultural differences. (2027, yearly reviewed)
3. By September 30 annually, the superintendent and the monitor shall conduct a joint review of FACE plan implementation.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By September 30, 2027, the superintendent shall provide the monitor with evidence in a mutually agreed upon format that the district has developed and begun to implement the FACE plan.

2. The district's annual report shall provide the monitor, in such format as required by the monitor, with evidence of the district's implementation of the FACE plan.

Recommendation (2)

1. By July 31, 2026, district staff shall submit to the superintendent and the monitor a review of each school's implementation of the current Code of Conduct to ensure that schools are:
 - using a tiered approach with clear expectations set by teachers and principals and disciplinary responses that progress with the severity of the violation, and
 - involving parents and the community in fostering a positive school culture.
2. By October annually, the district shall review the code with all stakeholders to ensure that rules are clear, communication is consistent, and systemic for monitoring and reporting violations are in place. (2026, annually reviewed)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 31, 2026, the required review shall be submitted to the monitor.
2. The district's annual report shall provide the monitor, in such format as required by the monitor, with evidence of the adherence of students and staff to the district's Code of Conduct.

Recommendation (3)

1. By January 1, 2027, the district shall begin to design and develop a district communication plan that will increase transparency and trust by consistently sharing accurate information through streamling channels to better engage families and the community. Implementation shall begin no later than April 1, 2027.

Evidence of Implementation.

By February 1, 2027, a communication plan shall be submitted to the monitor and superintendent.

By May 1, 2027, evidence of implementation of the communication plan in a format mutually agreed upon by the district and the monitor shall be submitted to the monitor.

Financial Findings and Recommendations

This section outlines the findings and recommendations the district commits to implement to improve financial stability and equitable distribution of resources. This section will address fiscal management and the development of a sustainable financial plan.

Findings

External and Internal Audit Reports

1. The 2024–2025 school year independent audit revealed that the district has been relying on a part-time outside consulting firm to oversee accounting functions. The district has not filled the position of Treasurer. This has resulted in:
 - General ledger accounts not reconciled timely.
 - No monthly analysis of account balances to identify unexpected variances.
 - Extra classroom activities not being reconciled monthly with bank statements by the extra classroom activity treasurers and no oversight during the year by the Finance Department. (Basic Financial Statements, Supplementary Information and Independent Auditors' Report 23-24 & 24-25.)
2. The Board of Education Fiscal Oversight training certificates are not maintained by the district as evidence of completion. (MVCSD Initial Risk Assessment Pertaining to Internal Controls June 2024)
3. The Business Office does not actively review audit logs pertaining to user login/logout reports in nVision. (MVCSD Initial Risk Assessment Pertaining to Internal Controls June 2024)
4. The district does not have formally approved contracts with the district of residence regarding out of district tuition. (MVCSD Initial Risk Assessment Pertaining to Internal Controls June 2024)
5. Certain cash receipts responsibilities are currently performed by the same individual, creating a segregation of duties risk. (MVCSD Initial Risk Assessment Pertaining to Internal Controls June 2024)
6. While the district maintains a payroll procedure manual in draft format, the district has not finalized the payroll procedure manual. In addition, the draft payroll procedure manual lacks detailed procedural information regarding the payroll function including but not limited to payroll accounting and reporting, processing, disbursement, and reconciliation functions. Payroll procedures are currently performed based upon past practice and verbal guidelines. (MVCSD Report on the Internal Controls of the Payroll Cycle, August 2024)
7. There is a lack of staff and segregation of duties in the Payroll Department. The lack of staff and segregation of duties negatively affects the payroll function. This increases the risk of potential errors and payroll processing not being performed accurately and

timely. Currently, many of the payroll functions are performed by a third-party consultant. (MVCSD Report on the Internal Controls of the Payroll Cycle, August 2024)

8. The district has not appointed a Deputy Treasurer. This is an increased risk for the district in the event of the Treasurer's absence. Without a Deputy Treasurer in the absence of the Treasurer, payroll would lack proper review and reconciliation functions as well as payroll check printing challenges. (MVCSD Report on the Internal Controls of the Payroll Cycle, August 2024)
9. Employee timesheets are not reviewed and approved according to district procedure. The district noted that incorrect timesheets were utilized in multiple instances. There is a risk that timesheets may be reported inaccurately and not properly approved. (MVCSD Report on the Internal Controls of the Payroll Cycle, August 2024).

Budget

10. There is no evidence of a current budget development calendar.
11. There is no evidence of district staff participating in developing the budget.
12. The budget is not aligned with the district's long-term operating plan or a capital plan.
13. The budget does not appear to align with the district's stated academic or social/emotional needs and does not appear to account for year-to-year enrollment fluctuations.
14. There is among district staff a general lack of understanding of the budget and budget process and its direct implications for instruction.
15. The board budget policies have not been reviewed and updated.

Cash Flow

16. There is no evidence of a calendar that shows revenue or expenditure.
17. There is no evidence of monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly cash flow analysis.
18. There is no monthly Treasurer's report presented to the board.
19. The Medicaid collection process is inefficient.

Contracting Processes

20. There is no central repository of memorandums of Understanding (MOU), memorandums of agreement (MOA) and contracts for the current school year.

Facilities

21. There is no evidence that the district has processes for long- or short-term planning for buildings, grounds, and facilities maintenance, repair, and construction.

Long Term Planning and Internal Operational Efficiency

22. The district does not have a long-term financial plan.

23. Due to the lack of an organizational chart or structures, the district has difficulties projecting hiring decisions across the district.
24. Currently, all three bargaining units are in negotiations for new contracts.

Technology

25. The technology department operates siloed from the rest of the district. There is a lack of clear communication from the technology department to school and district staff.
26. There is no technology plan that is connected to instructional practices, student learning, data-driven instruction and professional development.
27. The technology department appears to have many instructional apps and programs, but they are not universally used across the district and known by the faculty/staff.
28. Staff and parents report that the district website is not user-friendly. It is difficult to use, and in many instances, the information is outdated.

External and Internal Audit Reports

Recommendation (1)

1. The district shall consider hiring qualified personnel to fill the vacant financial and payroll positions. Once these positions are filled, the district should institute processes and procedures to ensure that accounts are reconciled regularly throughout the year. In addition, implementing a year-end closing checklist would assist the district in ensuring all closing entries were properly posted and appropriate analysis of account balances is performed to ensure accuracy. To be implemented no later than June 30, 2026.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 1, 2026, the district shall have filled vacant positions and have the processes and procedures for account reconciliation.

Recommendation (2)

1. By September 15, 2026, the district shall obtain all Fiscal Oversight Training Certificates for all board trustees as required by NYSED.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By September 15, 2026, the board shall have certificates of Fiscal Oversight Training for all trustees.

Recommendation (3)

1. By September 1, 2026, the Business Office shall begin to perform periodic reviews of the user login/logout reports available within nVision to determine whether users are accessing the application during appropriate business hours. The review process should be documented and communicated to the Assistant Superintendent for Business.

Evidence of Implementation

1. Beginning September 15, 2026, the Business Office shall provide the monitor with copies of the reports within 10 business days of their completion.

Recommendation (4)

1. By June 30, 2026, the district shall put in place a process by which the district shall enter into formal contracts with the district of residence for students placed in the district. These contracts shall be approved by the board. .

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 1, 2026, the district shall provide the monitor, in such format as required by the monitor, documentation that the process has been implemented.

Recommendation (5)

1. By March 1, 2026, the district shall establish a process whereby the person depositing cash into the district bank accounts is separated from the person reviewing or reconciling the bank accounts.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By March 2, 2026, the Business Office shall provide the monitor with documentation that the process has been developed and implemented.

Recommendation (6)

1. By September 1, 2026, the Business Office shall update and finalize the draft payroll procedure manual. The draft payroll procedure manual should be revised to include detailed procedural information regarding payroll accounting and reporting, processing, disbursement, and reconciliation functions.
2. The procedural manual shall be periodically reviewed by the Assistant Superintendent for Business or designee to ensure that the responsibilities are adequately performed at the district and comply with federal and State regulations. (Quarterly each year)

Evidence of Implementation

1. By September 15, 2026, the Assistant Superintendent for Business shall provide the monitor with a copy of the finalized version of the payroll procedure manual.
2. The district shall include in its quarterly progress reports evidence that the periodic reviews by the Assistant Superintendent for Business have been conducted.

Recommendation (7)

1. By June 15, 2026, the Business Office shall perform a cost-benefit review of the Payroll Department to determine and evaluate its current staffing model. This will provide the district with insight into where additional staffing is needed and assess potential cost differentials of an in-house model or a co-sourced model.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By July 1, 2026, the review of the Payroll Department shall be submitted to the superintendent and the monitor.

Recommendation (8)

1. No later than March 1, 2027, the Business Office shall formally appoint an individual as a Deputy Treasurer. This will enhance the payroll function and ensure there is an individual who can perform all of the payroll functions required should the Treasurer be absent.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By March 15, 2027, the district shall provide the monitor with evidence that the Deputy Treasurer has been appointed by the board.

Recommendation (9)

1. By January 1, 2027, a procedure shall be implemented by which all employee timesheets shall be approved by the appropriate individuals listed on the timesheet and the appropriate timesheets shall be utilized within each unit.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By February 1, 2027, the district shall provide the monitor with evidence that the procedure has been communicated to all employees and is being implemented.

Recommendation (10)

1. Effectively immediately, a district budget development calendar shall be created.

Evidence of Implementation

1. No later than December 1, 2026, the budget development calendar shall be reviewed by the superintendent and the monitor and approved by the board.

Recommendation (11)

1. The proposed budget each year shall be developed with the following aspects:
 - Input from stakeholders
 - Decision making informed by academic performance data and student social-emotional needs.
 - Projections of future revenues, expenditures, and enrollment
 - Review of past and current year budgets
 - Analysis of current staffing, resource allocation, and expenditures

Evidence of Implementation

1. By March 1, 2026, and by March 1 annually thereafter, the proposed district budget incorporating these aspects shall be submitted to the monitor.

Recommendation (12)

1. By June 30, 2026, the board shall review the following budget policies:
 - #2330 – Compensation and Expense (*Adopted, July 12, 2006*)
 - #4420 – Compensation and Related Benefits (*Adopted, July 12, 2006*)
 - #5110.2 – Budget Planning and Development (*Adopted, July 12, 2006*)
 - #5120 – School District Budget Hearing (*Adopted, July 12, 2006*)
 - #6520 – Workers' Compensation (*Adopted, July 12, 2006*)

Evidence of implementation

1. By June 30, 2026, the district shall submit to the monitor resolutions showing board adoption of updated policies.

Recommendation (13)

1. By September 1, 2027, the Business Office shall develop and maintain a calendar that identifies when the district receives its largest revenues and has its largest expenses.

Evidence of implementation

1. By September 15, 2027, the monitor and the superintendent shall have completed a joint review of the calendar.

Recommendation (14)

1. Effective immediately, there will be a Treasurer's report presented monthly to the board.

Evidence of Implementation

1. The Assistant Superintendent for Business shall provide the monitor monthly with a copy of the Treasurer's report.

Recommendation (15)

1. By June 1, 2026, the district leadership, including the Director of Special Education, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services, and the Assistant Superintendent for Business, shall review the Medicaid processes, establish a Medicaid Compliance Officer, and develop efficient procedures to appropriately submit Medicaid billing.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By June 1, 2026, the superintendent shall provide the monitor with a copy of new Medicaid procedures.

Recommendation (16)

1. By February 1, 2026, all MOU's, MOA's and contracts shall be collected and be stored with the Board Clerk.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By March 1, 2026, the board clerk shall provide the monitor with an inventory of all MOUs, MOAs, and contracts in her possession.

Recommendation (17)

1. By November 30, 2026, the Business Office shall plan and develop a long-term facilities and grounds plan with a building-by-building schedule for annual on-going repairs.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By December 15, 2026, the monitor and the superintendent shall be provided with a copy of the long-term facilities plan.
2. By January 1, 2027, the plan shall be submitted to the board for approval.

Recommendation (18)

1. By June 15, 2027, the district shall plan, develop, and implement a long-term financial plan that is a multiyear roadmap that projects revenues and expenditures to ensure the district's financial stability and support its strategic goals. (year 3 & 4)

Evidence

1. By July 1, 2027, the multiyear plan shall be submitted to the monitor.

Recommendation (19)

1. By April 1, 2026, the district leadership along with the Technology Director and district stakeholders shall revise the technology plan to ensure that it enhances all learning, increases student engagement, and improves access to resources for students and teachers.
2. By July 1, 2026, the district shall begin to implement the technology plan.

Evidence of Implementation

1. By April 15, 2026, the technology plan shall be submitted to the monitor and the superintendent and presented to the board by May 15, 2026.
2. By September 1, 2026, the district shall provide in such manner as required by the monitor evidence of implementation of the technology plan.

Summary

The MVCSD is embarking on a comprehensive journey of academic and financial recovery, spanning the 2025–2026 through 2029–2030 school years. Under State monitoring as of July 15, 2025, the district faces significant hurdles in student performance, staffing, and financial stability. To address these challenges, the monitor and MVCSD have developed a detailed Work Plan focused on improving academic outcomes, achieving long-term financial stability, and creating a more equitable school system. This plan is guided by the monitor, who will provide oversight and ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. The Work Plan outlines key strategies, including improving leadership through professional development and clear communication, recruiting and retaining qualified staff, implementing evidence-based instructional practices, fostering a positive school climate, and enforcing strict expenditure controls. These strategies are further elaborated with specific recommendations and timelines for implementation, covering areas such as board governance, staffing, curriculum, special education services, community engagement, and financial management. The MVCSD commits to complying with a series of assurances to implement this Work Plan to address issues and provide a successful future for the district and its students.